

Educator: Cynthia Saunders

PPSNo: 178-1827



State Board of Education

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Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

December 6, 2018

CERTIFIED MAIL

Ms. Cynthia Saunders
6158 Northeast 66th Street
Silver Springs, Florida 34488

RE: Finding of Probable Cause
Case No.: 178-1827
DOE No.: 635961

Dear Ms. Saunders:

Pursuant to the provisions of Sections 1012.795 and 1012.796, Florida Statutes, I find probable cause exists to justify sanctions against your Florida educator certificate. Penalties levied against you may include reprimand, fine, probation, restriction of the scope of practice, suspension not to exceed five years, revocation not to exceed ten years or the permanent revocation of your Educator Certificate.

An Administrative Complaint and Election of Rights (appeal) form are enclosed. Please complete and sign the enclosed Election of Rights form and return the fully executed form to the Office of Professional Practices Services, 325 West Gaines Street, 224E, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, contact the Office of Professional Practices Services at (850) 245-0438.

Please govern yourself accordingly.

Sincerely,

Pam Stewart

ENCLOSURES

**STATE OF FLORIDA
EDUCATION PRACTICES COMMISSION**

**PAM STEWART, as
Commissioner of Education,**

Petitioner,

vs.

CASE NO. 178-1827

CYNTHIA SUMNER SAUNDERS,

Respondent.

ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT

Petitioner, Pam Stewart, as Commissioner of Education, files this Administrative Complaint against CYNTHIA SUMNER SAUNDERS. The Petitioner seeks the appropriate disciplinary sanction of the Respondent's educator's certificate pursuant to sections 1012.315, 1012.795, and 1012.796, Florida Statutes, and pursuant to Rule 6A-10.081, Florida Administrative Code, Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida, said sanctions specifically set forth in sections 1012.795(1) and 1012.796(7), Florida Statutes.

The Petitioner alleges:

JURISDICTION

1. The Respondent holds Florida Educator's Certificate 635961, covering the areas of Mathematics and School Principal, which is valid through June 30, 2019.
2. At all times pertinent hereto, the Respondent was employed as a Deputy Superintendent of Instruction in the Manatee County School District.

MATERIAL ALLEGATIONS

3. In and around 2014 to 2016, Respondent, in her supervisory and administrative position, fraudulently inflated graduation rates for her district by instructing subordinate district employees to improperly code student withdrawals. Respondent improperly instructed district employees to code withdrawing students as "withdrawn to home education" when neither the students nor the students' parents had any intention of home schooling. As a result of Respondent's conduct, during the school year 2014/2015, of 121 students withdrawn from school, only six were properly coded. The improper coding of students' withdrawals caused Respondent's district's graduation rate to be incorrectly reflected as above average for the state.

The Petitioner charges:

STATUTE VIOLATIONS

COUNT 1: The Respondent is in violation of section 1012.795(1)(g), Florida Statutes, in that Respondent has been found guilty of personal conduct which seriously reduces effectiveness as an employee of the school board.

COUNT 2: The Respondent is in violation of section 1012.795(1)(j), Florida Statutes, in that Respondent has violated the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession prescribed by State Board of Education rules.

RULE VIOLATIONS

COUNT 3: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(b)2, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has intentionally distorted or misrepresented facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.

COUNT 4: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(b)3, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has used institutional privileges for personal gain or advantage.

COUNT 5: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(c)1, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has failed to maintain honesty in all professional dealings.

COUNT 6: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(c)6, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has used coercive means or promised special treatment to influence professional judgments of colleagues.

COUNT 7: The Respondent is in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(c)8, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has submitted fraudulent information on a document in connection with professional activities.

(SIGNATURE ON FOLLOWING PAGE)

WHEREFORE, based on the reasons set forth herein and in accordance with the Explanation of Rights and Election of Rights forms attached to and made a part of this Administrative Complaint, Petitioner respectfully recommends that the Education Practices Commission impose an appropriate sanction against the Respondent's educator's certificate pursuant to the authority provided in sections 1012.795(1) and 1012.796(7), Florida Statutes. The sanctions imposed by the Education Practices Commission may include, but are not limited to, any one or a combination of the following: issuing the Respondent a written reprimand; placing the Respondent on probation for any period of time; restricting the Respondent's authorized scope of practice; assessing the Respondent an administrative fine; directing the Respondent to enroll in the Recovery Network Program; suspending the Respondent's educator's certificate for a period of time not to exceed five years; revoking the Respondent's educator's certificate for a period of time up to 10 years or permanently; determining the Respondent to be ineligible for certification; or barring the Respondent from reapplying for an educator's certificate for a period of time up to 10 years or permanently.

EXECUTED on this 6th day of December, 2018.



PAM STEWART, as
Commissioner of Education
State of Florida

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES SERVICES**

**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 178-1827**

Respondent Name: Cynthia Sumner Saunders	Reported by: PPS
DOE Number: 635961	Date Opened: December 22, 2017
Date of Birth: September 12, 1964	Informal Conference: June 11, 2018
Employer: Manatee	Investigator: Adrienne Bergh
Site: District	
Position: Deputy Superintendent	

CERTIFICATION AND DEGREE

Certificate Type: Professional	Area(s) of Coverage:
	Mathematics
Validity: 2014-2019	School Principal
Degree: Masters Educational Leadership Nova Eastern University	

LEGAL COUNSEL

DOE Counsel:	Educator's Counsel: Pro Se
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ALLEGATIONS

It is alleged between 2014-2016, Ms. Saunders directed staff to code GED students as "withdrawn to home education," thereby inflating graduation rates.

Cynthia Sumner Saunders
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DOCKET KEY:

District Report.....DR
District Report Additional Information.....Dra
Investigative Documents.....ID
Informal Conference.....IC
Informal Conference ResponseICr

ALLEGED VIOLATION(S)

Section 1012.795(1), Florida Statutes

- (g) Upon investigation, has been found guilty of personal conduct which seriously reduces that person's effectiveness as an employee of the district school board;
- (j) Has violated the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession prescribed by State Board of Education rules;

State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.081(3), Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

- (b) Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
- (d) Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.

State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.081(4), Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

- (b) Shall not intentionally distort or misrepresent facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.

State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.081(5), Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

- (a) Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.

INVESTIGATION

COMPANION: DANIEL LUNDEEN 178-1818

Cynthia Sumner Saunders
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BACKGROUND / SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Cynthia Saunders has been an educator for in Manatee County for four years. At the time of the allegation she was employed as the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, a position she has held since 2013. Ms. Saunders' prior experience includes 23 years in Marion County.

Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) is the primary mechanism for funding the operating costs of Florida's school districts and the foundation for financing Florida's K-12 educational programs. FEFP bases financial support for education upon the individual students participating in a particular educational program. FEFP funds are generated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students in each of the funded education programs by cost factors to obtain weighted FTE students. Weighted FTE students are then multiplied by a base student allocation and by a district cost differential to determine the base funding from state and local FEFP funds.

Home Education is a parent-directed educational option that satisfies the requirement for regular school attendance. Home Education students are able to enter institutions of higher learning and are eligible to participate in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. Each year, the Florida Department of Education surveys all school districts to determine the numbers of students and families who have registered their intent to establish home education programs.

Florida adults who do not have a high school diploma can earn a high school equivalency credential by taking the General Education Development (GED) test. The GED test can only be administered through GED testing centers. The Commissioner of Education awards a State of Florida High School Diploma to residents who meet the passing standards.

On October 14, 2016, Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart sent a letter to Manatee County School District Board Chair Karen Carpenter advising information had been received regarding potentially improper withdrawal of students from public school to home school. Manatee County withdrew their students from high school and enrolled them in home school at a rate far exceeding the state average. Between 2013 and 2015, the number of seniors withdrawn to home education increased by 700%. During the 2014/2015 school year, 88 of the 121 seniors coded as withdrawn to home school were withdrawn to home school on June 6, 2015, the end of the school year.

Commissioner Stewart directed the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct an investigation. (DRa 27-28)

The investigation period was October 2016 to August 2017.

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The OIG requested the parental contact information, letters of intent, and annual evaluations for Manatee County Home Education students for the 2014/2015 school year. The information provided by Office of Student Assignment (OSA) Director Daniel Lundeen revealed that only six of the 121 high school seniors withdrawn to home education were coded properly.

- W24 is the code for any K-12 student who withdraws from school to attend a Home Education program.
- W26 is the code for any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult education program prior to completion of graduation requirements, or to pursue their GED. (OIGa 23)

If Manatee County School District had properly coded the 115 seniors for the 2014/2015 school year, the district's overall graduation rate would drop from 77.9% to 75.4%. Using the recalculated graduation rate, the Manatee School District would fall from 35th place to 49th place in the district graduation rate rankings. There were no changes in the school or district grade. (OIG 8)

On or about April 24, 2017, Director Lundeen provided a sworn statement to the OIG in which he stated the directive to push students into home education came from Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders. Director Lundeen said there was a gap between the schools getting the information to the OSA. Typically parents would come to the OSA office to withdraw their children, but since the base schools were providing the forms, they weren't always sending the information to OSA. When asked why there was a spike in home school enrollment after the first semester and at the end of the school year, Director Lundeen stated he thought the schools did it to collect the FTE funding.

Deputy Superintendent Saunders advised the OIG that she directed staff to withdraw students into home education if they were pursuing a GED, and schools in Manatee County were following her instructions in how to code these students. It was the way she was taught and trained in Marion County.

On or about November 17, 2017, the OIG substantiated the allegation against Deputy Superintendent Saunders for directing staff to code students pursuing their GED as home education thus creating falsely inflated graduation rates. The allegation against Director Lundeen was not substantiated.

The OIG recommended Manatee County OSA audit all files audit all files of students withdrawn to home education to ensure all statutes and rules were being followed. During the audit, it was discovered that Horizons Academy, the alternative school for students with disciplinary issues, was not following procedures with regard to consulting

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parents and forwarding intent notices to OSA. Horizons accounted for 96 seniors coded as withdrawn to attend a Home Education Program in the 2015/2016 school year.

During the 2016/2017 school year, only 24 students were withdrawn to home education.

On or about December 22, 2017, the OIG provided the report to Professional Practices Services (PPS).

INVESTIGATOR COMMENTS

Paula Nigrelli was out injured during March and part of April. A request was made for a statement; however, as of June 19, 2018, none has been received.

The OIG spoke with 20 parents of the 121 home educated students. Thirteen of them stated they had no intention of home schooling their child. (OIG 9)

WITNESS / VICTIM STATEMENTS

Program Specialist Alicia Carillo stated Mr. Lundeen was following Ms. Saunders' orders. Ms. Saunders has more reach than the typical instructional administrator. Specialist Carillo's office was always considered "operational" until Ms. Saunders took over and made it "instructional."

Specialist Carrillo said Ms. Saunders changed the district's compulsory age policy from age 18 to align with the state's compulsory age of 16, which meant all students who were not on track to graduate with their cohorts were pushed into alternative education. At the time, Central High School served as a recovery school and the Life Program allowed for online credit recovery. Both programs allowed students to earn a High School Diploma between the ages of 16-18. Once the compulsory age changed, it was increasingly difficult for students to be eligible for the alternative programs to the point that Central High School was closed. The Life Program still exists, but it usually only offered a limited amount students who are missing a few credits and are in grades 11 or 12.

As a result of assisting with the audit for the 2014/2015 school year, Specialist Carrillo said it appeared Ms. Saunders directed school principals to identify credit deficient students between the ages of 16-18 and withdraw them to Home Education. At first it seemed like schools were just using the W24 Home Education code without a Notice of Intent (to home educate). Their office, which handles the Notices, saw a large spike without the Home Enrollment forms, and they notified their supervisor, Mr. Lundeen. Mr. Lundeen informed Ms. Saunders that signed letters of intent were required for any student withdrawn with the W24 code. Soon after, the OSA saw an increase in notices submitted directly by the schools instead of the parents.

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When the parents received a notice to produce a student's portfolio as part of a yearly audit, some stated they never intended to homeschool their child. Parents were angry at being misled and not understanding the process and responsibilities of Home Education. Parents are required to fill out a Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program, which many had taken to mean as a withdrawal form. Mr. Lundeen was alerted that it appeared Home Education enrollments were the dumping ground for credit deficient students. They reached out to the Dropout Prevention Department, but everyone was under the direction of Ms. Saunders.

Specialist Carrillo told the Inspector General's Office she asked Deputy Superintendent Saunders for a specific statute or policy to support coding GED students as withdrawn to home education. Deputy Superintendent Saunders referred Specialist Carrillo to the "Home Education Frequently Asked Questions" document, which does not specifically mention GED students. (ID 2-3)

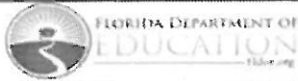
PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

1. OIG Report (Thumb drive housed in PPS)

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INFORMAL CONFERENCE AND RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

1. In accordance with Section 1012.796, Florida Statutes, an opportunity for a conference was provided on June 11, 2018.
2. Ms. Saunders responded to the conference via telephone.
3. Ms. Saunders submitted a response to the investigation that Included:
 - A letter which states in part the initial investigation did not contain certain key facts which revealed exculpatory evidence. Ms. Saunders attached documentation showing one particular school was not following district protocol. Horizons Academy accounted for 80% of the incorrectly coded students. Horizon does not receive a letter grade and there was no gain to the district. Horizons was often late in submitting all the paperwork required to withdraw a student to Home Education. As soon as Ms. Saunders received notice of concern from FLDOE, the district implemented corrective action and safeguards to ensure the enrollment process was correctly followed. Because of this, withdrawal to home education decreased 80% for the 2016/2017 school year: from 121 to 24 seniors. (ICr 2-7)
 - A letter from Ms. Saunders' attorney in response to the OIG findings stating Ms. Saunders was trained in Marion County on the proper procedure and codes for the withdrawal to home school process and had no reason to doubt her training. When Ms. Saunders was appointed as Executive Director of Secondary Education in Manatee County she implemented the procedures she had been trained to use in Marion County. The intent to provide students as many options as possible to achieve success and pursue post-secondary education is different than falsely inflating graduation rates. (ICr 9-23)



Logged in as Jenna Hurst PP

Update Profile | Logoff

Educator Profile Lookup - Details

Educator Information (Submit Additional Info)

Name	SAUNDERS, CYNTHIA SUMNER	License Type	6001 - Educator Certification	License Expiration Date	06/30/2019
Date of Birth	09/12/1954	License #	635961	Rank	5 Year Renewable Professional
Entity #	614826	Status	20 - Certified	District	41 - MANATEE

Previous Names

Name	Date Changed
SAUNDERS, CYNTHIA	09/17/1999
SUMNER, CYNTHIA B	09/17/1999
BRANTLEY, CYNTHIA B	09/17/1999
SUMNER, CYNTHIA	09/17/1999
SUMNER, CYNTHIA BRANTLEY	09/17/1999
BRANTLEY, CYNTHIA	09/17/1999
SAUNDERS, CYNTHIA	09/17/1999

Subjects

License Type	Subject Type	Subject	Rank	Basis Code	Status	Effective Date	Expiry Date
6001 - Educator Certification	1 - Grades 6-12	1031 - Mathematics	5 Year Renewable Professional		Issued	07/01/2014	06/30/2019
6001 - Educator Certification	F - All Levels	1049 - School Principal	5 Year Renewable Professional		Issued	07/01/2014	06/30/2019

Attachments

Attached To	Number	FileNet Corrid	License Type	Document Type	Date Added	Added By	
FileNet Entity	614826	101924067		District Certificate	11/12/2013	XKMBDR	View
FileNet Entity	614826	100933901		District Certificate	11/11/2008	XKMAH-V	View
FileNet Entity	614826	21432003		District Certificate	10/26/2003	XKMAHV	View
FileNet Entity	614826	20427728		Certificate	03/22/2001	MARKST	View
FileNet Entity	614826	500114323		Application - CG10	01/08/2001	OCR TRAN	View
FileNet Entity	614826	500114169		School Principal Competency Verification	01/05/2001	OCR TRAN	View
FileNet Entity	614826	13027191		Application - CG10	10/28/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10973656		Application - CG10	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10545462		Application - CG10	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10545463		Miscellaneous Letter/Document	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10545466		Miscellaneous Letter/Document	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10545465		Hardcopy Transcript Section Conversion	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10545464		Work Sheet - Manual Conversion	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	11966698		Work Sheet - Manual Conversion	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	11944612		Application - CG10	09/19/1999	UNLOAD6	View
FileNet Entity	614826	16008606		Score Report	05/20/1999	KK61	View
FileNet Entity	614826	11921650		Transcript	01/30/1998	KKC9	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10933167		Score Report	02/24/1994	KK66	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10873696		Score Report	12/08/1993	KK66	View
FileNet Entity	614826	10614652		Issue Request	01/11/1993	KK23	View

US Citizenship

Are you a U.S. Citizen?	Work Authorized:	DOE Verified:
Yes		Yes



Pam Stewart
Commissioner

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Mike Blackburn
Inspector General

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Case Number:
2016-0010

Date of Complaint:
October 14, 2016

Complainant:
Commissioner of Education, Pam Stewart

Subject:
Cynthia Saunders, Manatee County Deputy Superintendent

Period of Investigation:
October 2016 to August 2017

Type of Report:
FINAL

INTRODUCTION

On October 14, 2016, Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart sent a letter to Manatee County School District Board Chair Karen Carpenter. The letter stated that the Manatee County School District withdrew students from their high school and enrolled them in home school at a rate far exceeding the state average. On October 28, 2016, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Investigator Jeremy Billington spoke to Manatee County School District Choice Program Specialist Alicia Carrillo and requested parent contact information, letters of intent, and annual evaluations for Manatee County home education students for the 2014/15 school year. Manatee County School District Supervisor of Student Demographics, Projections, and Assignments Danny Lundeen responded to the OIG's request for information. The information provided by Mr. Lundeen revealed that only six of the 121 high school seniors withdrawn to home education were coded properly.

On April 24, 2017, Investigator Billington and Investigator Cynthia Wright traveled to Bradenton, Florida to conduct interviews with Manatee County School District staff.

BACKGROUND

The School District of Manatee County serves 48,884 students, in 63 schools: 36 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 6 high schools, and 10 combinations schools. The district employs over 7,000 people, including 3,500 teachers.

Home Education

Home Education is a parent-directed educational option that satisfies the requirement for regular school attendance. Parents have the choice to determine their child's educational path and the plan for reaching their goals. Students have the opportunity to explore and learn at their own

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Michael Olenick



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
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Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

December 29, 2017

Mr. Mitchell Teitelbaum
Staff Attorney
Manatee County School Board
215 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida 34206

Re: Cynthia Sumner Saunders
DOE No.: 635961
Case No.: 178-1827

Dear Mr. Teitelbaum:

This letter is to inform you that a complaint has been filed with the Office of Professional Practices Services regarding the above named individual.

The investigation into allegations against Cynthia Sumner Saunders has been assigned to a staff member who will be in contact with district or school staff in the near future. In addition to providing any requested documents or materials, please keep this office apprised of any pertinent information or changes in the employment status of Cynthia Sumner Saunders.

I encourage you to access information regarding this process and to view Final Order documents related to disciplinary actions on our webpage, www.myfloridateacher.com. If you or your staff has any questions regarding this process, or if we may be of any assistance in this or similar matters, please feel free to contact our office directly.

Sincerely,

Marian W. Lambeth

Marian W. Lambeth, Chief
Professional Practices Services



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Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

December 29, 2017

Dr. Diana Greene
Superintendent
Manatee County School Board
215 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida 34205

Re: Cynthia Sumner Saunders
DOE No.: 635961
Case No.: 178-1827

Dear Dr. Greene:

This letter is to inform you that a complaint has been filed with the Office of Professional Practices Services regarding the above named individual.

The investigation into allegations against Cynthia Sumner Saunders has been assigned to a staff member who will be in contact with district or school staff in the near future. In addition to providing any requested documents or materials, please keep this office apprised of any pertinent information or changes in the employment status of Cynthia Sumner Saunders.

I encourage you to access information regarding this process and to view Final Order documents related to disciplinary actions on our webpage, www.myfloridateacher.com. If you or your staff has any questions regarding this process, or if we may be of any assistance in this or similar matters, please feel free to contact our office directly.

Sincerely,

Marian W. Lambeth

Marian W. Lambeth, Chief
Professional Practices Services

pace, in any location, and at any time. Home education students are able to enter institutions of higher learning and are eligible to participate in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. Each year, the Florida Department of Education surveys all school districts to determine the number of students and families who have registered their intent to establish home education programs. For the 2015/16 school year, the numbers provided by the districts indicated that 58,197 families and 83,359 students participated in home education programs.

GED (General Education Development)

Florida adults who do not have a high school diploma can earn a high school equivalency credential by taking the GED Test. The GED exam covers four subtest areas and can only be administered through GED testing centers. The GED test credential is recognized nationwide and is accepted by more than 95% of U.S. employers, colleges, and universities. To earn a State of Florida High School Diploma you must earn a standard score of at least 145 on each of the four GED subtests. The Commissioner of Education shall award a State of Florida High School Diploma to Florida residents who meet the passing standard¹.

ALLEGATION AND FINDING²

The allegation that Manatee County School District Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders directed staff to code students pursuing their GED as home education students creating falsely inflated graduation rates was *Substantiated*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 14, 2016, Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart sent a letter to the Manatee County School District Board Chair Karen Carpenter stating that she was directing the OIG to investigate the matter.

A review of survey data³ revealed a spike in the number of seniors withdrawn to home education programs in the Manatee County School District. During the 2014/2015 school year, Manatee County reported 121 seniors withdrawn to home education. The data revealed that from 2013/2014 to 2014/2015 school years, the number of seniors withdrawn to home education in Manatee County increased over 700%. During the 2014/2015 school year, Manatee County School District reported more than three times the state average of seniors withdrawn to home education. Data further revealed 88 of the 121 seniors (73%) coded as withdrawn to home education by the Manatee County School District were withdrawn on June 6, 2015, the end of the 2014/15 school year.

The information provided by Mr. Lundeen revealed that only six of the 121 reported seniors withdrawn to home education were coded properly. A recalculation of the school grades and

¹ Florida Administrative Code Rule 6A-6.0201 State of Florida High School Diplomas program.

² The OIG findings were determined using the standards that appear on the signature page at the end of this report.

³ FDOE conducts five scheduled surveys of school district student information during the reporting year. The surveys are aggregated into publications and reports. This information is based on aggregate data from all five surveys.

graduation rate not including the 115 seniors coded incorrectly as home education students revealed no changes to the school or district grade; however, there was a drop in the graduation rate at Bayshore, Lakewood Ranch, Manatee, Palmetto, Southeast, and Braden River High Schools ranging from 1.4% to 6.2%. Coding the 115 seniors as drop out students for the 2014/15 school year, Manatee County School District's overall graduation rate would drop from the state average of 77.9% to 75.4%. Using the recalculated graduation rate, the Manatee County School District would have fallen from 35th place to 49th place in the district graduation rate rankings.

On July 15, 2016, Manatee County Schools Senior Report Specialist Paula Nigrelli sent an email to all registrars and principals across the district explaining the options for non-graduating seniors. The email stated, "They (students) should be encouraged to sign up for Home School, with the intent to take their GED. You should try to have them complete the 'Letter of Intent to Home Educate'." Ms. Nigrelli stated that she sends emails like these regularly, but they are reviewed, vetted, and approved by Mr. Lundeen and Ms. Saunders. Ms. Nigrelli stated that she shared her concerns with Mr. Lundeen and Ms. Saunders that seniors were coded incorrectly, but they explained that their interpretation of the statute was correct and needed to be followed.

On November 9, 2016, Ms. Saunders sent an email responding to an inquiry by Alicia Carrillo, Choice Program Specialist, Office of Students Assessment, regarding students pursuing their GED being coded as withdrawn to home education. Ms. Saunders referenced information from the FDOE School Choice Office's, 'Home Education Frequently Asked Questions' document. Ms. Saunders referenced no specific statute, administrative code, or policy to support her assertion that students pursuing their GED should be coded as withdrawn to home education. Additionally, the 'Letter of Intent to Home Educate' forms from Manatee County School District do not contain the GED Home Education program option. FDOE Division of Career and Adult Education Bureau Chief Tara Goodman confirmed that a student pursuing a GED should be coded as a W26 and not a W24⁴.

When asked to explain the rise in students being withdrawn to home education programs, Ms. Carrillo stated that the Manatee County School District administration made a decision to move failing students into alternative programs. Ms. Carrillo stated that she felt the district wanted to avoid the appearance of a student dropping out. Ms. Carrillo stated, "Ms. Saunders is administrating the processes of shifting things around." Ms. Carrillo stated that she felt what Ms. Saunders was asking the schools to do was unethical because schools were instructing parents to withdraw their children to home school but, they were not informing parents what that entailed. She stated that parents had complained to her that they felt they had to sign the home education form in order to withdraw their student even though they had no intention to home school their student. Ms. Carrillo stated, "When we started hearing students were being withdrawn to home education to work on a GED, we said that really didn't make much sense because we have never done that." Ms. Carrillo stated that she informed Ms. Saunders that the district had never signed students up for home school if they were pursuing their GED. She further stated that she questioned Ms. Saunders and asked her to provide documentation in statute to support coding students as home schooled. Ms. Carrillo stated that Ms. Saunders could only refer her back to the

⁴ The W26 code is for any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult education program prior to completion of graduation requirements. The W24 code is for any KG-12 student who withdraws from school to attend a Home Education program.

'Home Education Frequently Asked Questions' document. Ms. Carrillo opined that, "It was a twist on the understanding of the statute," and when asked if she felt it was intentional to boost graduation rates, Ms. Carrillo stated, "Yes."

The OIG spoke to the registrars at three high schools that stated they withdrew students into home education if the student was pursuing their GED. When asked if she had ever been directed to code students as home school rather than drop outs, Horizons Academy Registrar Andrea Dawsey stated that the district informed her that students who would be fifth year seniors should be coded as home school education. When asked who directed her to code students that way, Ms. Dawsey indicated that the district instructed everyone to do that. Ms. Dawsey further indicated that she was instructed to code students pursuing their GED as home school education. When asked if Cynthia Saunders instructed her to withdraw students into home education if the student was pursuing their GED, Ms. Dawsey confirmed that she did. Ms. Dawsey stated, "That's probably ... how the (graduation) rate is more going up, because they are actually going to take their GED, but we are putting them into home education, but that's what we were instructed to do."

Additionally, investigators made follow-up phone calls to parents/guardians of the 121 home educated students. The OIG made contact with 20 parents and confirmed that 13 students were withdrawn to home education even though their parents/guardians reported that they had no intention to home educate their child.

During her interview with the OIG, Ms. Saunders admitted to directing staff to withdraw students into home education if pursuing a GED. Ms. Saunders stated, "Whether it's correct or it's not correct, it was the process, as a principal, that was given to me and explained to me in a way that made sense." Ms. Saunders stated that schools in Manatee County were following her instruction in how to code these students. Ms. Saunders stated, "That was the process and the method I was trained for, so that was the method I communicated to the high school principals."

Based upon witness testimony and documentation received, the OIG determined that the allegation that Manatee County School District Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders directed staff to code students pursuing their GED as home education students creating falsely inflated graduation rates was ***Substantiated***.

The OIG recommends that the FDOE Division of Assessment, Research, and Measurement provide training to Manatee County School District administration and registrars regarding Florida Statute 1002.41, Home Education Programs, as well as Rule 6A-6.0201 State of Florida High School Diplomas program. Additionally, the OIG recommends the Manatee County School District Office of Student Assignment audit all files of students withdrawn to home education to ensure all Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules are being followed. The OIG will forward this report to the FDOE Office of Professional Practices to determine if Ms. Saunders violated Florida Statutes or the Principals of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida. The OIG also recommends that a copy of this investigative report be placed in Ms. Saunders' personnel file.

GOVERNING DIRECTIVES

1. Florida Statute 1002.41 - Home education programs (Exhibit 1)

(1) A "home education program" is defined in s. 1002.01. The parent is not required to hold a valid regular Florida teaching certificate.

(a) The parent shall notify the district school superintendent of the county in which the parent resides of her or his intent to establish and maintain a home education program. The notice shall be in writing, signed by the parent, and shall include the names, addresses, and birthdates of all children who shall be enrolled as students in the home education program. The notice shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days of the establishment of the home education program. A written notice of termination of the home education program shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days after said termination.

(b) The parent shall maintain a portfolio of records and materials. The portfolio shall consist of the following:

1. A log of educational activities that is made contemporaneously with the instruction and that designates by title any reading materials used.
2. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student.

The portfolio shall be preserved by the parent for 2 years and shall be made available for inspection by the district school superintendent, or the district school superintendent's agent, upon 15 days' written notice. Nothing in this section shall require the district school superintendent to inspect the portfolio.

(c) The parent shall provide for an annual educational evaluation in which is documented the student's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability. The parent shall select the method of evaluation and shall file a copy of the evaluation annually with the district school superintendent's office in the county in which the student resides. The annual educational evaluation shall consist of one of the following:

1. A teacher selected by the parent shall evaluate the student's educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the student. Such teacher shall hold a valid regular Florida certificate to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level;
2. The student shall take any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;
3. The student shall take a state student assessment test used by the school district and administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;
4. The student shall be evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of s. 490.003(7) or (8); or
5. The student shall be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the district school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent.

(2) The district school superintendent shall review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation of the student in a home education program. If the student does not demonstrate educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability, the district school superintendent shall notify the parent, in writing, that such progress has not been achieved. The parent shall have 1 year from the date of receipt of the written notification to

provide remedial instruction to the student. At the end of the 1-year probationary period, the student shall be reevaluated as specified in paragraph (1)(c). Continuation in a home education program shall be contingent upon the student demonstrating educational progress commensurate with her or his ability at the end of the probationary period.

(3) A home education program shall be excluded from meeting the requirements of a school day.

(4) Home education students may participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.15.

(5) Home education students may participate in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1009.53-1009.538.

(6) Home education students may participate in dual enrollment programs in accordance with ss. 1007.27(4) and 1007.271(13).

(7) Home education students are eligible for admission to Florida College System institutions in accordance with the provisions of s. 1007.263.

(8) Home education students are eligible for admission to state universities in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the Board of Governors.

(9) Testing and evaluation services at diagnostic and resource centers shall be available to home education program students, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities, in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.03.

(10) A school district may provide exceptional student education-related services, as defined in State Board of Education rule, to a home education program student with a disability who is eligible for the services and who enrolls in a public school solely for the purpose of receiving those related services. The school district providing the services shall report each student as a full-time equivalent student in the class and in a manner prescribed by the Department of Education, and funding shall be provided through the Florida Education Finance Program pursuant to s. 1011.62

2. Florida Administrative Code Rule 6A-6.0201 State of Florida High School Diplomas program (Exhibit 2)

(1) Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1003.435, F.S., the Commissioner shall award a State of Florida High School Diploma to a candidate who meets all of the following requirements:

(a) Takes at least one (1) exam of the 2014 GED® Test at a testing center in Florida approved by the Department of Education; and,

(b) Attains a minimum score of one hundred and forty-five (145) on each of the four (4) sub-tests of the 2014 GED® Test: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies.

(2) The Commissioner of Education shall award a State of Florida High School Diploma to a candidate who achieved the criteria in subsection (1) from January 1, 2014, to the effective date of this rule.

(3) The Department shall convert sub-test scores which meet the minimum requirement from test administrations at any approved GED® testing center in another state or jurisdiction for residents of the state of Florida. The Commissioner shall award a State of Florida High School Diploma to Florida residents who meet the passing standard as specified in paragraph (1)(b) of this rule or the Florida passing standard for any previous test series. Individuals

must provide proof of residency for a test score from another state or jurisdiction to be converted.

(4) The Department shall designate official testing centers in the state which are authorized to act as agents of the state in administering the 2014 GED® Test. The following entities are eligible to be authorized to offer the 2014 GED® Test:

- (a) Public schools or other appropriate facilities of a local education agency (LEA).
- (b) Public postsecondary educational institutions.
- (c) Correctional facilities for state and/or local inmates.
- (d) Correctional facilities for individuals in the custody of or under the supervision of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.
- (e) If adequate access to public testing is not available at public schools and public postsecondary educational institutions in the county, other not-for-profit educational institutions or other governmental entities, including public libraries, are eligible to be approved as testing centers.

(5) Each official testing center shall establish a schedule for testing which adequately meets the needs of the candidates within its service area.

(6) The Department shall maintain a perpetual record of individual test results and issue State of Florida High School Diplomas and official transcripts to successful candidates.

(7) The statewide testing fee for the 2014 GED® Test shall be thirty-two (32) dollars for each of the following sub-tests: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Social Studies, and Science. This fee shall be paid by the candidate at the time of the registration and scheduling of the test.

(8) A fee of fifteen (15) dollars shall be assessed for the following services and document production to test takers or other entities seeking official documents with the signed authority of the test candidate or recipient of the diploma for all documents and services provided on or after January 1, 2014:

- (a) Duplication of diploma and transcript: fifteen (15) dollars.
- (b) Conversion of scores from applicants who have taken the GED® tests in the military or other states or jurisdictions: fifteen (15) dollars.

3. FDOE Information Database Requirements: Automated Student Information System (Exhibit 3)

Category	Code	Definition
Withdrawal from Florida Public Schools	W24	Any KG-12 student who withdraws from school to attend a Home Education program.
Withdrawal from Florida Public Schools	W26	Any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult education program prior to completion of graduation requirements.

ALLEGATION: EVIDENCE & TESTIMONY

On October 14, 2016, Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart sent a letter to the Manatee County School District Board Chair Karen Carpenter (Exhibit 4). The letter stated that the Manatee County School District withdrew students from their high school and enrolled them in home school at a rate far exceeding the state average. On October 28, 2016, OIG Investigator Billington spoke to Ms. Carrillo and requested parent contact information, letters of intent, and annual evaluations for Manatee County home education students for the 2014/15 school year.

On November 15, 2016, Manatee County Schools Supervisor of Student Demographics, Projections, and Assignment Danny Lundeen sent the requested information to Investigator Billington. The letter sent by Mr. Lundeen provided an overview of his findings (Exhibit 5). In the letter Mr. Lundeen stated, "...schools used the W24 code although the student had already transferred to other schools, signed up for the GED, or moved out of state." After speaking with Division of Career and Adult Education Bureau Chief Tara Goodman, the OIG confirmed the W24 code is for students who intend to home educate, and the W26 code is for students pursuing their General Education Development (GED).

A review of survey data revealed a spike in the number of seniors withdrawn to home education programs in the Manatee County School District (Exhibit 6). During the 2012/2013 school year, Manatee County reported 16 seniors withdrawn to home education. During the 2013/2014 school year, Manatee County reported 15 seniors withdrawn to home education. During the 2014/2015 school year, Manatee County reported 121 seniors withdrawn to home education. During the 2015/2016 school year, Manatee County reported 169 seniors withdrawn to home education. From 2013/2014 to 2014/2015 school years, the number of seniors withdrawn to home education in Manatee County increased over 700%. During the 2014/2015 school year, Manatee County School District reported more than three times the state average of seniors withdrawn to home education. During the 2015/2016 school year, Manatee County School District reported more than five times the state average of seniors withdrawn to home education. Data further revealed 88 (73%) of the 121 seniors coded as withdrawn to home education by the Manatee County School District were withdrawn on June 6, 2015, which is the end of the 2014/15 school year (Exhibit 7).

Mr. Lundeen provided information for only 11 of the 121 seniors withdrawn to home education. The OIG called the 11 seniors to confirm their home education status for the 14/15 school year, but received no returned phone calls. Of the 11 students provided by Mr. Lundeen, only six had adequate documentation to verify their home education status (i.e. signed Letters of Intent, follow-up letters to the parents/guardian, up-to-date enrollment records, and accurate withdrawal codes). A recalculation of the school grades and graduation rate not including the 115 seniors coded incorrectly as home education students revealed no changes to the school or district grade; however, there was a drop in the graduation rate at Bayshore, Lakewood Ranch, Manatee, Palmetto, Southeast, and Braden River High Schools ranging from 1.4% to 6.2%. If Manatee County School District had properly coded the 115 seniors for the 2014/15 school year, the district's overall graduation rate would drop from 77.9% to 75.4%. Using the recalculated graduation rate, the Manatee County School District would fall from 35th place to 49th place in the district graduation rate rankings.

On July 19, 2016, the FDOE OIG reviewed a similar allegation regarding the improper withdrawal of students from public school to home education in the Marion County School District during the 2014/15 school year (Exhibit 8). Specifically, the complaint alleged that under the direction of then Superintendent George Tomin, school administrators withdrew failing students and enrolled them into home education, so those students would not count against the district's grade or graduation rate. The OIG review revealed that Manatee County School District Superintendent Diana Greene and Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders were employed at the Marion County School District at that time. When asked about the similar allegation in Marion County of manipulating data to boost graduation rates, Ms. Greene stated that, "There is no connection besides the fact I used to work there." Ms. Greene stated, "It is highly unfair that someone decides just because I worked in Marion County that I'm somehow connected." Ms. Saunders stated that while a principal in Marion County, she was directed by former Superintendent Jim Yancy to enroll students into home education if the student is pursuing their GED. When asked if she provided the same directive to the schools in Manatee County, Ms. Saunders stated, "Yes I did." Ms. Saunders stated, "That was the method I was trained for, so that was the method I communicated to the high school principals."

On July 15, 2016, Manatee County Schools Senior Report Specialist Paula Nigrelli sent an email to all registrars and principals across the district explaining the options for non-graduating seniors (Exhibit 9). The email stated, "They (students) should be encouraged to sign up for Home School, with the intent to take their GED. You should try to have them complete the 'Letter of Intent to Home Educate'." Ms. Nigrelli stated that she sends emails like these regularly, but they are reviewed, vetted, and approved by Mr. Lundeen and Ms. Saunders. Ms. Nigrelli stated that she shared her concerns with Mr. Lundeen and Ms. Saunders that seniors were coded incorrectly, but they explained that their interpretation of the coding was correct and needed to be followed.

On November 9, 2016, Ms. Saunders sent an email responding to an inquiry by Ms. Carrillo regarding students pursuing their GED being coded as withdrawn to home education (Exhibit 10). Ms. Saunders referenced information from the FDOE School Choice Office's, 'Home Education Frequently Asked Questions' document. No specific statute, administrative code, or policy was referenced to support her assertion that students pursuing their GED should be coded as withdrawn to home education. Additionally, the 'Letter of Intent to Home Educate' forms from Manatee County School District do not contain the GED Home Education program option (Exhibit 11). FDOE Division of Career and Adult Education Bureau Chief Tara Goodman confirmed that a student pursuing a GED should be coded as a W26 and not a W24.

The OIG investigators made follow-up phone calls to parents/guardians of the 121 home educated students. The OIG made contact with 20 parents and confirmed 13 students were withdrawn to home education even though their parents/guardians reported that they had no intention to home educate their child. Manatee County School District provided three additional files for students whose parents had no intention to home educate their student (Exhibit 12). The OIG Investigator asked Mr. Lundeen to explain why parents stated that they never enrolled their child in home education. Mr. Lundeen opined that the parents might have thought they were withdrawing their child from school when they completed the notice of intent form.

On August 22 and 23, 2017, Investigators Billington and Wright returned to Manatee County for follow-up questions with Ms. Saunders and Ms. Greene. Both Ms. Saunders and Ms. Greene reiterated their was no intent to manipulate the dropout rate or graduation rates.

Employee/Vendor Testimony

**Interview of Alicia Carrillo, Choice Program Specialist Office of Students Assessment
(Exhibit 13)**

Ms. Carrillo stated that she has been in her current position for four years, but has worked in the Office of Student Assignment for 10 years. Ms. Carrillo stated that she worked as a registrar prior to becoming a supervisor. Ms. Carrillo stated that her supervisor is Danny Lundeen. Ms. Carrillo stated that her office "is where the homeschool accountability is maintained." Ms. Carrillo stated that the end of a semester or end of the school year is the most common time for students to withdraw for home education. Students and parents realize the semester or school year is lost so they look for alternatives. Ms. Carrillo stated that students signing up for home education must have a letter of intent signed by the parent and submitted to her office. Ms. Carrillo stated that she sends an email to the school notifying them a letter of intent was received, and the school may withdraw the student to home education. Ms. Carrillo stated that in recent years more letters have been coming from the schools instead of directly from the parents. Ms. Carrillo stated that since the OIG request for information in November of 2016, they found many of the letters of intent were not getting to their office, and some that were received were incomplete. Ms. Carrillo stated, "This was very discouraging, because they totally bypassed the process."

Ms. Carrillo stated that there was a decision by the Manatee County Schools administration to move failing students into alternative programs. Ms. Carrillo stated that she felt the district wanted avoid the appearance of a student dropping out. Ms. Carrillo stated, "Ms. Saunders is administrating the processes of shifting things around." Ms. Carrillo stated that she felt what Ms. Saunders was asking the schools to do was unethical because schools were instructing parents to withdraw their children to home school but they were not informing parents what that entailed. She stated that parents had complained to her that they felt they had to sign the home education form in order to withdraw their student even though they had no intention to home school their student. Ms. Carrillo stated, "When we started hearing students were being withdrawn to home education to work on a GED, we said that really didn't make much sense because we have never done that." Ms. Carrillo stated that she informed Ms. Saunders that the district had never signed students up for home school if they were pursuing their GED. She further stated that she questioned Ms. Saunders and asked her to provide documentation in statute to support coding students as home schooled. Ms. Carrillo stated that Ms. Saunders could only refer her back to the 'Home Education Frequently Asked Questions' document. Ms. Carrillo stated that it was a twist on the understanding of the statute. When asked if she felt it was intentional to boost graduation rates, Ms. Carrillo stated "Yes."

Ms. Carrillo stated that she told Ms. Saunders the process was being done incorrectly, and her office has never withdrawn a student to home education who wanted to get their GED. Ms. Carrillo stated that Ms. Saunders told her it was in statute. Ms. Saunders sent her a link to frequently asked questions for home education, not to any statute that supported the directive.

When asked if the directive by Ms. Saunders is unethical, Ms. Carrillo stated, "Yes, because there is no follow-up and schools are misleading parents. Some parents have no intention to homeschool."

Interview of Danny Lundeen, Supervisor Student Demographics, Projections, and Assignment (Exhibit 14)

Mr. Lundeen stated that he has been in his current position for twenty years and has worked for the Manatee County School District since 1988. Mr. Lundeen stated that his direct supervisor is Cynthia Saunders. Mr. Lundeen stated that the district has had many dropouts and has had trouble handling and managing dropouts. Mr. Lundeen explained that one of the ways district staff was instructed to help with the dropout rates was to withdraw students into home education as opposed to dropping out. Mr. Lundeen stated that the district administration tried to create a path for students who were withdrawing from school to try to get them to sign up for home education. Mr. Lundeen stated that the students signed up for home education with their parents' permission.

When asked if the schools were pushing students into home education, Mr. Lundeen stated, "the schools were directed to push the students towards home education." Mr. Lundeen stated that he believed this directive came from Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders. When asked if there was a push by administration to improve the graduation rates, Mr. Lundeen stated, "of course." When asked if the directive was unethical, Mr. Lundeen opined, "If it is done right it's not unethical, I don't believe, and the intent was to do it right."

Mr. Lundeen stated that there was a gap between the schools getting the information to the Office of Student Assignment (OSA). Mr. Lundeen stated that schools were not following through and waiting until the end of the year to send the information. Mr. Lundeen stated that typically if you wanted to go into home education the parent would go to the OSA and sign up, and they would withdraw you from the school. Mr. Lundeen stated that the schools were withdrawing the students and they would provide the letter of intent to home educate to OSA. Mr. Lundeen stated that many of the schools were not sending the letters of intent to OSA. When asked why the schools were not sending the information to the OSA, Mr. Lundeen stated, "I don't think it was intentional, I think it was just sloppy." When asked if someone at the Manatee County School District was directing schools to boost the graduation rate Mr. Lundeen stated, "I believe the intent was that they were dropping out of school and disappearing, so I think the intent was to try to give them one last effort to try to keep track of them." The OIG Investigator asked Mr. Lundeen to explain why parents stated that they never signed their child up for home education. Mr. Lundeen explained that is probably true. Mr. Lundeen stated that the school would take the withdrawal form and use that as the notice of intent. Mr. Lundeen stated that the parents probably did not fully understand what they were doing. Mr. Lundeen stated that the parents felt like they were withdrawing their student. When asked if he thought the schools were intentionally misleading the parents, Mr. Lundeen stated, "I couldn't honestly say they were intentionally trying to mislead the parent."

The investigator explained that there was a spike in home school enrollment at the end of the first semester and at the end of the year and asked Mr. Lundeen to explain why that would occur. Mr.

Lundeen stated that he felt the schools were pushing the kids into home education and doing it after FTE week to ensure the school collected the FTE funding. Mr. Lundeen further stated that the schools would push the students towards home education, an alternative program, or even have them drop out once the funding had been collected.

Interview of Paula Nigrelli, Senior Report Specialist (Exhibit 15)

Ms. Nigrelli stated that she has been in her current position for three years. Ms. Nigrelli stated her supervisor is Danny Lundeen. Ms. Nigrelli explained that students pursuing their GED require parents to sign and complete a Letter of Intent Form to Home Educate to withdraw their child. Ms. Nigrelli stated that the letter is sent to the Office of Student Assignment to process. Ms. Nigrelli stated that these students are coded as W24, or withdrawn to home education. When asked why a student pursuing their GED is coded as a home education student, Ms. Nigrelli stated that was the directive given to her by Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders. When asked if she felt the directive by Ms. Saunders was unethical or misleading, Ms. Nigrelli stated that she was concerned it was going to cause problems down the road. Ms. Nigrelli stated prior to the directive they were coding GED students as W26. Ms. Nigrelli stated that the coding for GED and home education students was different in the past.

When asked about the email she sent on July 15, 2016, to all registrars and principals across the district explaining the options for non-graduation seniors, Ms. Nigrelli stated that emails like these are sent regularly, but reviewed, vetted, and approved by Mr. Lundeen and Ms. Saunders. Ms. Nigrelli stated that she is doing what she is told. Ms. Nigrelli stated that she shared her concerns with Mr. Lundeen and Ms. Saunders, and they explained that their interpretation of the coding was correct and needed to be followed.

Interview of Andrea Dawsey, Registrar Horizons Academy (Exhibit 16)

Ms. Dawsey stated that some parents want to home school their children because they do not want them attending Horizons. Ms. Dawsey stated that the OIG request for information brought many issues to light. Ms. Dawsey stated that parents would sign their kids up for home education, but when responding to the OIG request she found that the student had moved to another school, another county, or dropped out completely.

Ms. Dawsey stated that the district puts a lot of pressure on Horizons to boost graduation rates because they are considered the school with troubled students known to have a high number of dropouts. Ms. Dawsey stated that parents sign their students up for homeschool at their base school or the assignment office. Ms. Dawsey stated that she sends the withdrawal information to the assignment office once she gets the parent signature. Ms. Dawsey stated that she enrolls students into home education if the student is pursuing their GED. Ms. Dawsey stated that the district informed her that students who would be fifth year seniors should be coded as home school education. When asked who directed her to code students that way, Ms. Dawsey indicated that the district instructed everyone to do that way. When asked if Cynthia Saunders instructed her to withdraw students into home education if the student was pursuing their GED, Ms. Dawsey confirmed that she did.

Ms. Dawsey stated, "That's probably ... how the (graduation) rate is more going up, because they are actually going to take their GED, but we are putting them into home education, but that's what we were instructed to do."

Interview of Don Sauer and Veronica Bostic, Principal and Registrar Manatee High School (Exhibit 17)

Mr. Sauer stated that he has been the principal since 2012, and Ms. Bostic stated that she has been a registrar since 2009. Ms. Bostic stated that Manatee High School has the largest student enrollment in the district, so it is not surprising they have the second largest number of home education students in the district. Ms. Bostic stated that parents could come to the school or the Office of Student Assignment to withdraw their student to home education. If the parent goes to the school to withdraw their student, the Office of Student Assignment is notified of a student withdrawn to home education. Ms. Bostic stated that she withdraws students into home education if they are pursuing a GED because the student is studying at home for the GED. Ms. Bostic stated that she was directed by school counselors to code students pursuing a GED to homeschool education. Ms. Bostic stated that she does not know where the counselors received this directive. Ms. Bostic stated that she was just following directions.

Mr. Sauer stated that they do not feel any unwarranted pressure from the district to get students to graduate. Mr. Sauer stated that it is important to the entire district that students graduate.

Interview of Carl Auckerman and Shari Stinton, Principal and Registrar Palmetto High School (Exhibit 18)

Mr. Auckerman stated that the 2016/17 school year was his first year at Palmetto High School, and he previously worked at the district office as the director of personnel. Ms. Stinton stated that she has been the registrar for 11 years at Palmetto High School. Ms. Stinton stated that if a student wanted to get their GED, she would have a parent sign a letter of intent for home education. When asked why she would place a student into home education when they were pursuing their GED, Ms. Stinton stated that it is presumed a student is taking courses to help them study to take the GED. Ms. Stinton stated that in the beginning of the school year during a registrars meeting with the district, she was instructed to code students pursuing their GED as home education students. Ms. Stinton stated that she could not recall who conducted the registrar meeting. Ms. Stinton stated that the intent of the meeting was to help with graduation rates and emphasized getting the letter of intent signed and sent to the assignment office in a timely manner.

Interview of James Hird, Principal Horizons Academy (Exhibit 19)

Mr. Hird stated that he has been the principal of Horizons Academy since July of 2016, and previously was the principal at James Tillman Elementary School in Manatee County. Mr. Hird stated that Horizons is made up of students who are chronic disrupters and those who create safety concerns. Mr. Hird stated that the criteria of how students come to Horizons has changed over time depending on district leadership. Mr. Hird stated that Horizon students fit the profile of

the students that are more likely to withdraw to home education, obtain their GED, or dropout of school completely.

Mr. Hird stated that they try to give the best option for students and prevent them from dropping out. Mr. Hird stated that the school's process is to have the parent sign a letter of intent for home education and send it to the assignment office. Mr. Hird stated that there was a meeting with Manatee County administration early in the 2016/2017 school year to ensure the process was followed with signed letters of intent and getting the letters to the assignment office. Mr. Hird stated that he was not aware of any directive by administration to withdraw students into home education that should be dropouts or GED students.

Interview of Dr. Diana Greene, Superintendent Manatee County Schools (Exhibit 20)

Ms. Greene stated that she has been the superintendent of Manatee County for two years, and served as deputy superintendent in Marion County prior to coming to Manatee County. Ms. Greene stated that she is not trying to boost graduation rates; but wants students to graduate. Ms. Greene stated that if a student wants to go the GED route, then a school would withdraw the student to homeschool after a letter of intent from the parent was signed. Ms. Greene stated, "The entire process is explained to the parent." Ms. Greene stated that she has never heard from any parent that a school is forcing them to enroll their student into homeschool.

When asked about similar allegation in Marion County of manipulating data to boost graduation rates, Ms. Greene stated that there is no connect besides the fact I used to work there. Ms. Greene stated, "It is highly unfair that someone decides just because I worked in Marion County that I'm somehow connected." When asked if it was unethical to direct staff to withdraw students into homeschool, when they should be withdrawn to GED, Ms. Greene stated, "Yes, but I think it's because the interpretation is if they (students) had nonattendance they can go to homeschool and take their GED."

On August 22 and 23, 2017, Investigators Billington and Wright returned to Manatee County for follow-up questions.

Ms. Greene stated she was not involved in meetings regarding the coding of home education students. Ms. Greene reiterated that the home education process was a continuation from what was implemented and taught in Marion County. When asked why there was a spike in home education students, Ms. Greene stated, "That was the year (14/15) we closed our alternative school." Ms. Greene stated that students were given the option to home educate, and after 30 days they made a decision to go into GED, continue to home educate, or dropout. Ms. Greene stated Manatee County has a 9% drop out rate, and if they were trying to manipulate home education numbers to boost graduation rates, they were doing a poor job. Ms. Greene stated she would not stake her reputation or her job on a 3% improvement in graduation rates. Ms. Greene stated that there was no intent to manipulate the dropout rate or graduation rates.

Interview of Cynthia Saunders, Deputy Superintendent Instructional Services (Exhibit 21)

Ms. Saunders stated that she has been at her current position for four years. Ms. Saunders stated that she previously worked as a principal at Lake Weir High School in Marion County. Ms.

Saunders stated that the audit was a blessing, and brought some issues to the forefront. Ms. Saunders stated that due to the audit findings, there was more emphasis by the districts to track students and require the proper documentation. Ms. Saunders stated that the assignment office is now checking the database every couple of weeks to ensure that every student is accounted for.

Ms. Saunders stated that while a principal in Marion County, she was directed by Superintendent Jim Yancey to enroll students into homeschool education if the student is pursuing their GED. When asked if she was disseminating the same information to the schools in Manatee County, Ms. Saunders stated, "Yes I did. I was over the high schools." Ms. Saunders stated, "That was the process and the method I was trained for, so that was the method I communicated to the high school principals." Ms. Saunders stated, "That's a process that's been used for a long time." Ms. Saunders stated that no one has ever indicated that this process was incorrect.

Ms. Saunders stated, "I would never deliberately not follow the rules and regulations by the Department of Education, intentionally." Ms. Saunders stated, "Whether it's correct or it's not correct, it was the process, as a principal, that was given to me and explained to me in a way that made sense." Ms. Saunders stated that schools in Manatee County were following my instruction in coding these students. Ms. Saunders stated that no staff members voiced concerns over homeschool and GED coding of students. Ms. Saunders stated, "If we are not following the right guidelines, we will correct that." Ms. Saunders stated that, "She (Superintendent Green) was aware of that and aware of the process that we did here, she wasn't involved in the initiation or the meeting."

On August 22, 2017, Investigators Billington and Wright returned to Manatee County for follow-up questions.

Ms. Saunders stated that she worked for the Marion County School system, in different capacities, for 22 years prior to coming to Manatee County. Ms. Saunders added that she has worked for the Marion or Manatee County school systems for 27 years. Ms. Saunders reiterated that Manatee County students are coded as home education students if they are taking courses or preparing for their GED. Ms. Saunders stated that FDOE never indicated that Marion or Manatee County were coding students incorrectly, and she welcomes guidance to correct their practices if needed.

CONCLUSION

Based upon witness testimony and documentation received, the OIG determined that the allegation that Manatee County School District Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders directed staff to code students pursuing their GED as home education students creating falsely inflated graduation rates was *Substantiated*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The OIG recommends that the FDOE Division of Assessment, Research, and Measurement provide training to Manatee County School District administration and registrars regarding Florida Statute 1002.41, Home Education Programs, as well as Rule 6A-6.0201 State of Florida High School Diplomas program. Additionally, the OIG recommends the Manatee County School District Office of Student Assignment audit all files of students withdrawn to home education to ensure all Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules are being followed. The OIG will forward this report to the FDOE Office of Professional Practices to determine if Ms. Saunders violated Florida Statutes or the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida. The OIG also recommends that a copy of this investigative report be placed in Ms. Saunders' personnel file.

NOTICE TO SUBJECT(S)

In accordance with Section 20.055(6)(e), Florida Statutes, on September 18, 2017, Manatee County School Board Chair Karen Carpenter and Manatee County Schools Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders, were notified by mail of the investigative findings and provided with an opportunity to submit a written response to these findings.

On October 30, 2017, the OIG received a response to the investigative report from Erin Jackson of Johnson and Jackson Employment Defense Counsel. Ms. Johnsons' response is attached to this report (Exhibit 22). In the response Ms. Johnson reiterates that Ms. Saunders was relying on previous training and had no reason to question that training. Ms. Johnson states that the issues were isolated to one school within the district with over 80% of the students coming from that school. Finally, Ms. Johnson states that the district has implemented improvements to ensure compliance with laws and rules.

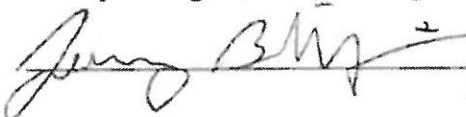
The OIG appreciates the district's efforts to make improvements and ensure compliance with laws and rules and acknowledged in the report that Ms. Saunders relied on previous training. No other information was presented in the response that would require further investigation or substantially affect the findings of this investigation, or change in the report conclusion. As such, the conclusion and recommendations will remain unchanged.

DISTRIBUTION

Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education
Linda Champion, Deputy Commissioner
Kathy Hebda, Chief of Staff
Matthew H. Mears, General Counsel
Marian Lambeth, Professional Practices
Diana Greene, Superintendent Manatee County School District
Cynthia Saunders, Deputy Superintendent Manatee County School District
Karen Carpenter, Manatee County School Board Chair

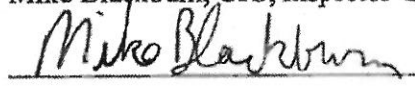
Investigation Conducted by:

Jeremy Billington, CIGI, Investigator

 11/17/17
Date

Investigation Approved By:

Mike Blackburn, CIG, Inspector General

 11/17/17
Date

Authority to conduct this investigation resides in Chapter 20.055 and 1001.20, Florida Statutes, which creates in each state agency the Office of the Inspector General, charged with responsibility for promoting accountability, integrity, and efficiency in government. The Inspector General is authorized to initiate, conduct, supervise, and coordinate investigations that detect, deter, prevent, and eradicate fraud, waste, mismanagement, misconduct, and other abuses in state government.

Office of Inspector General investigations are conducted in compliance with the Quality Standards for Investigations found within the Principals and Standards for Offices of Inspector General.

The evidentiary standard used by the FDOE OIG in determining whether the facts and claims asserted in the complaint were proven or disproven is based upon the preponderance of the evidence. Preponderance of the evidence is contrasted with "beyond a reasonable doubt," which is the more severe test required to convict a criminal and "clear and convincing evidence," a standard describing proof of a matter established to be substantially more likely than not to be true. OIG investigative findings classified as "substantiated" means there was sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions occurred and there was a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation. Investigative findings classified as "not substantiated" means sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did not occur and there was no violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to substantiate the allegation. Investigative findings classified as "insufficient evidence to substantiate" means there was insufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did or did not occur and a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation could not be proven or disproven. Investigative findings classified as "insufficient policy" means the alleged actions occurred, but were not addressed by agency policy.

Bergh, Adrienne

From: Alicia Carrillo <carrilloa@manateeschools.net>
Sent: Monday, April 16, 2018 4:37 PM
To: Bergh, Adrienne
Subject: RE: CONFIDENTIAL Investigation
Attachments: Adult Statement Acroform AB.pdf

Ms. Bergh,

Attached is what I prepared the weekend after we initially spoke. I have other accounts of how Ms. Saunders has modified operations that have negatively impacted those with the most need of our assistance, unfortunately those management directives do not directly go through my office and therefore I am unsure I should list them since I did not actively participate in the changes demanded. Suffice it to say that Ms. Saunders' reach goes much farther than what an administrator for the "Instructional" branch of our district would normally exercise. As an example, my department was traditionally under the operational branch of our district and as soon as she became Deputy Superintendent of Instruction she moved us to the instructional side – I can only assume this occurred as a power play so that she could control our operations with greater ease. I am happy to discuss with you all my concerns in detail if you would like to set up a phone appointment.

I apologize this is a very busy time of the year for me we have elementary school choice in full swing. I am willing to do anything needed to facilitate your investigation for the greater good.

Thank you.

Alicia Carrillo

From: Bergh, Adrienne [mailto:Adrienne.Bergh@fldoe.org]
Sent: Friday, April 6, 2018 1:59 PM
To: Alicia Carrillo <carrilloa@manateeschools.net>
Subject: RE: CONFIDENTIAL Investigation

******* WARNING: This email was sent from a source outside of the Manatee County School District!!**

Adrienne Bergh
Investigator
Office of Professional Practices Services
Division of Public Schools
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 224
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
850-245-0438 Office
850-245-0621 Fax

ADULT STATEMENT

Sylvia Alicia Carrillo

Choice Program Specialist

NAME

POSITION/TITLE

5311 1st Avenue Dr NW

Bradenton

FL

34209

ADDRESS: STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

941.549.4354

michaelaliciacarrillo@msn.com

04/09/2018

(AREA) TELEPHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

DATE

Having been advised that I need not make this statement, declare that the following statement is given freely and voluntarily, without promise to benefit or privilege, and without threat or the use of force or duress, and I do hereby state the following:

Per our conversation I am making the following statement because I have witnessed a series of procedural changes that are counterproductive to our district's mission of educating "all" our students for "success" tomorrow. These procedural changes have eliminated educational opportunities for our most struggling students. The procedural changes I am referring to have been directed by Mrs. Cynthia Saunders, our current Deputy Superintendent of Instructional Services. She has directed her subordinates to implement procedures that skirt ethical integrity since her inception to the SDMC as Executive Director of Secondary Schools.

I am not certain on the exact date, but I believe it was as soon as Mrs. Saunders became the Executive Director of Secondary Schools, around the fall of 2013 that she changed our district's compulsory age policy from age 18 to align with the State's compulsory age of 16. This meant that any student that did not appear on track for graduation with their cohort year was pushed out of our schools into some form of alternative education. At that time we had Central High School which served as a credit recovery school as well as the Life Program which also allowed for fast paced credit recovery online courses at many of our High Schools. These programs helped many credit deficient students earn a high school diploma between the ages of 16-18. Once our compulsory age policy changed it became increasingly difficult for students to be eligible for these alternative programs to the point that Central High School was closed. The Life Program still exists but is usually only offered to students that are barely credit deficient and are in grades 11 or 12. As a result of my assistance in the audit of the 14/15 home school enrollments it appears that around the Fall of 2014 Mrs. Saunders directed High School Principals to identify students between ages 16-18 that were credit deficient to withdraw them to Home Education. At first the schools simply withdrew the students and used the W24 code indicating that they were going into Home Education with or without a signed letter of intent to support using the W24 withdrawal code. It took our office a while to realize this was taking place, around the Fall of 2015 we noticed a spike in the use of W24 codes that did not have Home Education enrollments, which are processed by our office. Once we found out that this was happening we alerted our Supervisor, Mr. Daniel Lundeen, and he informed Mrs. Saunders that signed letters of intent are required for any student being withdrawn with the W24 code. Soon after we began to see a large number of letters of intent submitted directly by the schools to our office as opposed to by the parents. We alerted our Supervisor once again that it appeared as though Home Education enrollments were being used as a dumping ground for credit deficient students, we even reached out to our drop out prevention (DOP) department in the hope that they could prevent this from continuing. Unfortunately, they all seemed to be under the same direction by Mrs. Saunders.

I have read each page of this statement consisting of ____ page(s), each page of which bears my signature, any corrections bear my initials, and I certify that the facts contained herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

SIGNATURE

WITNESS, Adrienne Bergh

Page Number 1

STATEMENT

Below is an email that details one such attempt to reach out to DOP:

From: Manualita Arroyo
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2015 3:14 PM
To: Skip Wilhoit; Steve Wigginton
Cc: DL-OSA Office of Student Assignment
Subject: Home School Student

Hi Skip, we just got a letter of intent for Home school for [REDACTED]. She is [REDACTED] yrs. old, [REDACTED] grade with 1 credit coming out of Manatee High School. I don't think home school is an option for her. The possibility of her dropping out of school/home school is very high. Do you have any recommendations for her? If there is anything you can assist with is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
Manualita Arroyo
Student Assignment Office
941-708-4971 x2015


From: Skip Wilhoit
Sent: Wednesday, October 21, 2015 8:53 AM
To: Manualita Arroyo <arroyom@manateeschools.net>; Steve Wigginton <wiggints@manateeschools.net>
Cc: DL-OSA Office of Student Assignment <DL-osaofficeofstudentassignment@manateeschools.net>; Mike McCann <mccannm@manateeschools.net>
Subject: RE: Home School Student

Thanks for reaching out Manualita. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to prevent this student from enrolling in home education and indeed it appears she has been approved and enrolled as N998 since 10/16/15. However, due to her extensive history of truancy we have the ability to provide increased monitoring. According to FS 1003.26, we will need to conduct a monthly review of this student's portfolio and ensure that the family is actually making an attempt to deliver educational services. The language from the statute is below. Please let us know if your office has the capability to comply with the statutory requirement. Her participation in the LIFE program (our only academic alternative program) will not be possible at her age and grade level, due to local restrictions we have placed on enrollment there. Thanks - Skip

FS 1003.26

(f)1. If the parent of a child who has been identified as exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance enrolls the child in a home education program pursuant to chapter 1002, the district school superintendent shall provide the parent a copy of s. 1002.41 and the accountability requirements of this paragraph. The district school superintendent shall also refer the parent to a home education review committee composed of the district contact for home education programs and at least two home educators selected by the parent from a district list of all home educators who have conducted a home education program for at least 3 years and who have indicated a willingness to serve on the committee. The home education review committee shall review the portfolio of the student, as defined by s. 1002.41, every 30 days during the district's regular school terms until the committee is satisfied that the home education program is in compliance with s. 1002.41(1)(b). The first portfolio review must occur within the first 30 calendar days of the establishment of the program. The provisions of subparagraph 2. do not apply once the committee determines the home education program is in compliance with s. 1002.41(1)(b).

I have read each page of this statement consisting of 2 page(s), each page of which bears my signature, any corrections bear my initials, and I certify that the facts contained herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.


SIGNATURE


WITNESS, Marianne Bergh

**Any KG-12 Student who Withdraws from School to Attend a Home Education Program
MANATEE, 2012-13 through 2015-16, Survey 5 Final**

Grade	Count of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2012-13	% of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2012-13	Count of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2013-14	% of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2013-14	Count of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2014-15	% of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2014-15	Count of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2015-16	% of Withdrawal Code by Grade Level (W24) 2015-16
PK	0	0%	2	0%	1	0%	0	0%
KG	11	0%	10	0%	8	0%	19	0%
01	13	0%	16	0%	12	0%	14	0%
02	4	0%	12	0%	15	0%	17	0%
03	13	0%	13	0%	12	0%	13	0%
04	16	0%	10	0%	19	0%	14	0%
05	12	0%	15	0%	10	0%	18	0%
06	30	1%	31	1%	20	1%	23	1%
07	41	1%	25	1%	46	1%	26	1%
08	34	1%	43	1%	58	1%	46	1%
09	59	1%	46	1%	61	1%	87	2%
10	45	1%	55	1%	110	3%	144	3%
11	31	1%	53	2%	99	3%	189	5%
12	16	0%	15	0%	121	4%	169	5%

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL DISTRICT FUNDING

Article IX, section 1 of the Florida Constitution establishes the State of Florida's commitment to funding grades K-12 education, as follows: "The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is, therefore, a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education..."

In 1973 the Florida Legislature enacted the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and established the state policy on equalized funding to guarantee to each student in the Florida public education system the availability of programs and services appropriate to his or her educational needs that are substantially equal to those available to any similar student notwithstanding geographic differences and varying local economic factors.

To equalize educational opportunities, the FEFP formula recognizes: (1) varying local property tax bases; (2) varying education program costs; (3) varying costs of living; and (4) varying costs for equivalent educational programs due to sparsity and dispersion of the student population.

The FEFP is the primary mechanism for funding the operating costs of Florida school districts. As noted herein, there are other sources of funding; however, the FEFP is the foundation for financing Florida's K-12 educational programs. A key feature of the FEFP is that it bases financial support for education upon the individual student participating in a particular educational program rather than upon the number of teachers or classrooms. FEFP funds are primarily generated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students in each of the funded education programs by cost factors to obtain weighted FTE students. Weighted FTE students are then multiplied by a base student allocation and by a district cost differential to determine the base funding from state and local FEFP funds. Program cost factors are determined by the Florida Legislature and represent relative cost differences among the FEFP programs. In addition to the base funding allocation, two major allocations within the FEFP are the Supplemental Academic Instruction Allocation and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Guaranteed Allocation, which are explained on pages 18 and 19.

Scholarship payments for education are available pursuant to the provisions of three programs.

- (1) McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program – This program provides parents of students with disabilities the option to enroll their children in another public school within or adjacent to their home district or to apply for a scholarship to attend a participating private school. Participants must have been reported for funding in a school district during the prior October and February FTE surveys in order to be eligible.

Scholarship amounts are based on the lesser of the amount the student would have generated for district funding or the amount of applicable private school fees.

- (2) Gardiner Scholarship Program – The Gardiner Scholarship Program is designed to provide the option for a parent to better meet the individual educational needs of his or her child with a disability. The scholarship provides eligible students funds that can be used to purchase approved services or products, including tuition or fees associated with enrollment in an eligible private school, eligible postsecondary educational institution, a private tutoring program, a virtual program offered by a private online provider approved by the Florida Department of Education (department), the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) as a private paying student or an approved online course. Attending a public school in the prior-year is not a requirement to receive a Gardiner Scholarship.
- (3) Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program – These scholarships are funded directly by private voluntary contributions to nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations for students who qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches under the National School Lunch Act and students in foster care. In accordance with section 1002.395, Florida Statutes (F.S.), up to \$699 million in tax credits for



325 West Gaines St., Room # 220

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400



7017 2400 0000 8923 6276

CYNTHIA SAUNDERS
6158 NORTHEAST 66TH STREET
SILVER SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34488

CYNTHIA SAUNDERS

6158 NORTHEAST 66TH STREET

SILVER SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34488

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2. Article Number (*Transfer from service label*)

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CYNTHIA SAUNDERS
6158 NORTHEAST 66TH STREET
SILVER SPRING, FLORIDA 34488

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org

Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

January 23, 2018

Cynthia Sumner Saunders
6158 Northeast 66th Street
Silver Springs, Florida 34488

CERTIFIED MAIL
Case No. 178-1827

Dear Ms. Saunders:

In accordance with Section 1012.796, Florida Statutes, the Office of Professional Practices Services is charged with investigating alleged misconduct by Florida certified educators to determine if disciplinary actions should be pursued against a Florida Educator Certificate.

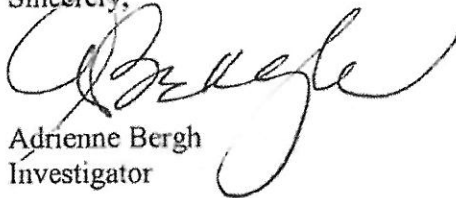
Following receipt of a complaint from the Office of the Inspector General, this office has determined an investigation is warranted into allegations that you directed your staff to code GED students in such a manner as to inflate graduation rates. If you have evidentiary¹ witnesses or documents pertinent to the case, send them to me no later than February 6, 2018.

Once our investigation is concluded you or your attorney will be notified of the opportunity for an Informal Conference².

As required by Section 1012.796, F. S.³, this complaint and all information obtained pursuant to the investigation are confidential and exempt from public disclosure until the conclusion of the preliminary investigation.

Govern yourself accordingly.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Bergh
Investigator

¹ being, relating to, or affording evidence

² the complaint and all material assembled during the investigation may be inspected and copied by the certificateholder under investigation, or the certificateholder's designee, after the investigation is concluded, but prior to the determination of probable cause by the commissioner.

³ The complaint and all information obtained pursuant to the investigation by the department shall be confidential and exempt from the provisions of s. 119.07(1) until the conclusion of the preliminary investigation of the complaint

HERSHEL LYONS
CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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CYNTHIA SAUNDERS
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SILVER SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34488



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PS Form 3811, July 2015 PSN 7530-02-000-9053

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Signature Restricted Delivery | \$ |

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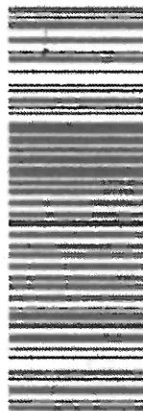
City

CYNTHIA SAUNDERS
6158 NORTHEAST 66TH STREET
SILVER SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34488

PS Form 3800, April 2015 PSN 7530-02-000-9047

See Reverse for Instructions

CERTIFIED MAIL



7017 2400 0000 8923 6276

7017 2400 0000 8923 6276



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines St., Room # 204
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

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SILVER SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34488



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A. Signature

C. Saunders

- ☐ Agent
☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name)

C. Saunders

C. Date of Delivery

5-31-18

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State Board of Education

Marva Johnson, *Chair*
Andy Tuck, *Vice Chair*
Members
Gary Chartrand
Ben Gibson
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Joe York



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org

Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

May 25, 2018

CERTIFIED MAIL

Cynthia Saunders
6158 Northeast 66th Street
Silver Springs, Florida 34488

RE: Notice of Informal Conference
Case No: 178-1827

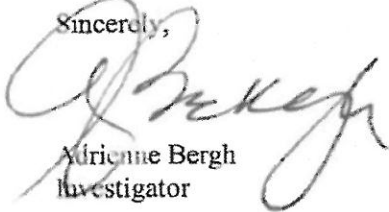
Dear Ms. Saunders:

On or about December 22, 2017, you were sent notification by certified mail that a case had been opened with the Florida Department of Education's Office of Professional Practices Services and if founded, these allegations could result in sanctions against your Florida educator certificate.

This office has concluded its preliminary investigation and is prepared to provide you an opportunity to review and respond. You are not required to respond; however, in accordance with Sections 120.60(6) and 1012.796, Florida Statutes, you have opportunity to submit documents or statements which refute, explain or mitigate the allegations.

In order to facilitate this opportunity, I have scheduled an informal telephone conference for you on **June 11, 2018 at 9:00 am**. At this time you should call me at 850.245.0438. If you want to appear in-person to respond, please inform me in advance.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Bergh
Investigator

HERSHEL LYONS
CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3.
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1. Article Addressed to:

CYNTHIA SAUNDERS
6158 NORTHEAST 66TH STREET
SILVER SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34488



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2. Article Number (Transfer from card on label)

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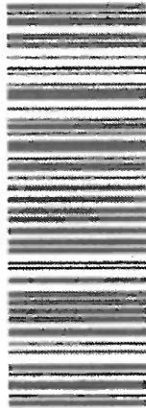
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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines St., Room #200
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

SECTION 1

Cynthia Saunders
6158 NE 66th Street
Silver Springs, FL 34488
(352) 427-1588

June 18, 2018

VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY

Florida Board of Education
Professional Practices Services
Division of Public Schools
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
Attn: Investigator Adrienne Bergh

Re: Investigation Manatee County School District
Case Number: 178-1827

Dear Ms. Bergh:

This will confirm receipt of your letter on behalf of the Florida Department of Education and a follow up to our telephone call of June 11, 2018.

As an Investigator, it is important to gather as much relevant information as possible in order to carefully evaluate a file and draw a supported and well documented conclusion. As such, the initial investigation did not contain certain key documents that would assist in evaluating this matter.

These documents regrettably were never requested by the investigator and would have revealed exculpatory evidence in favor of the School District of Manatee County and my position as their Deputy Superintendent.

I have taken the opportunity to attach the document by name and summarize the significant findings and conclusions of facts that are contained in the documents and demonstrate that of all Manatee County Public Schools, 80% of the coding issue came from one particular school, Horizon's Academy that did not follow formalized District protocols enumerated below:

ATTACHMENT "1" - The October 30, 2017 Response to the Inspector General and Accompanying Exhibits:

This document and enclosures are significant because there were several factors that were not considered in the initial investigation conducted by the Auditor General that address the merits and the allegations alleged against the School District that *parental consent was not required or waived* by the school district in order to code students to alternative programs and enhance graduation rates:

[Enclosure 2] Documentation that demonstrates the processes to be followed by schools and district personnel to continue to improve the drop out/graduation rates for Marion County Schools that was implemented at Manatee County Public Schools. Parental Notification was required at page 2.

[Enclosure 3] Home Education Enrollment Process for Manatee County Public Schools that requires parental notification at page 1 and 2.

[Enclosure 4] Withdrawn to Home Education Code – this document also requires parental notification and requires parental signature at page 1.

[Exhibit 3] Frequently Asked Questions and Answers from School Choice from the Florida Department of Education that mirrors the practices and procedures then utilized by Manatee County Public Schools – that included parental notification and intent at page 1.

[Exhibit 4] School District of Manatee County's Letter of Intent to Home Educate – requires parental consent.

[Exhibit 5] Remedial Measures taken by the School District of Manatee County at a Board Workshop of April 12, 2016. Parental notification required.

[Exhibit 8] Dropout Prevention Guidelines for the School District of Manatee County that requires Parental Consent and a "Records Request Received to the District at page 2. "Parental confirmation" is necessary. The Home Education Termination Process at page 7 also required parental consent and documentation.

ATTACHMENT "2" - August 25, 2014 Email and attachments from Steve Wigginton to all Middle School and High School Registrars regarding the Withdrawal of Students and the Requirement for Parental Consent:

This document was not requested at the time of the initial investigations and is significant because **Parental Consent** was clearly required and communicated to all schools and their Registrars for the withdrawal of students.

In addition, the Power Point Presentation presented to all High School and Middle School Registrars reflects parental consent is required and that the failure to obtain parental consent would result in the student being withdrawn W02 changed to W15.

W24	Any PK-12 student who withdraws from school to attend a home education program	Use this code for any student who withdraws to be home schooled. Do not use this code for Hospital Homebound students. HH students remain enrolled at their home schools to receive services. Registrars should additionally keep an active log book for all students withdrawn under W-02, W-24, and W-26 codes. Registrars must forward the student's name to the district's Parent Information Center, if a student has not been enrolled as an N998 within 10 school days of receiving a W24 code. Registrars should then properly code the student as a W-05 or W-15, as appropriate. There must be an Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form on file if a W05 code is used for students who are 16 or 17 years of age.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent stated they intended to home school their child on 3/17/15. 2. As of 3/31/15 no N998 code entered. Student's name forwarded to district and code changed to W-15.
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W26	Any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult program prior to completion of graduation requirements.	W26 should only be issued once a student has taken the TABE test and a determination has been made to their educational placement. Students scoring above a level 8 may be coded as W26 and enrolled in an adult educational program. Students scoring below a Level 8 will need to be enrolled in the district GED prep program and withdrawn as a W02. Registrars must forward the student's name to the district truancy office if a student has not enrolled in the adult education program or GED prep program within 10 school days of receiving a W26 or W02 code. Registrars should then properly code the student as a W-05 or W15. The district truancy office must then contact the home of any student not enrolled in the adult education or GED prep program to ascertain the reason for not enrolling.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent indicated on 4/15 the student was withdrawing to attend MTI for his GED. 2. Student failed to enroll at MTI code changed to W-05. 3. Student not enrolled at MTI as of 4/31. Contacted parent and the student was involved in an auto accident. Will check back on 5/12 for enrollment.
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ATTACHMENT "3" - May 30 2014 Email and attachments from Paula Nigrelli to all Elementary School Registrars and exhibits regarding the Withdrawal of Students and the Requirement for Parental Consent:

This document was not requested at the time of the initial investigations and is significant because **Parental Consent** was clearly required and communicated to all schools and their Registrars for the withdrawal of students.

ATTACHMENT "4" - August 25, 2014 Email and attachments from Paula Nigrelli to all Elementary School Registrars regarding the Withdrawal of Students and the Requirement for Parental Consent:

This document was not requested at the time of the initial investigations and is significant because Parental Consent was clearly required and communicated to all schools and their Registrars for the withdrawal of students.

ATTACHMENT "5" 2014-2015 Student Withdrawal Form used by Horizon's Academy and Other High Schools during the 2014-2015 School Year and 2014-2015 Student Handbook:

This document is significant because **parental consent** is clearly required as stated within all the documentation. There are required parental signature blocks. The 2014-2015 Student Handbook confirms parental rights and the retention of student records.

Remediation and Corrective Action

The District took corrective actions upon completion of its audit. Specifically, the District immediately implemented a corrective action plan to ensure that only those students that go through the proper procedures are coded as W24 and are subsequently recoded as W05 if a student later fails to follow the procedural requirements.

Attached as **Exhibit "6"** is the "Manatee County School District Attendance Handbook", that provides in significant detail the process for properly withdrawing students, the required parental consent that must be obtained and the proper coding of students.

Attached as **Exhibit "7"** are the "Dropout Prevention Guidelines", enumerating the steps required by the District to properly code the withdrawal of students and required documentation.

Ms. Carillo at the Office of Student Assignment is now required to follow up with the parent and current school of enrollment to confirm the parents' intent to withdraw the student into homeschool education. Prior to the audit, neither the District nor Florida statute required such confirmation.

Moving forward, the District will continue implementing and improving upon this corrective action plan by including additional safeguards, including annual audits by the Student Information System Department, that requires the random pulling of cumulative folders of students to ensure that those parents who desire to homeschool their children correctly complete letters of intent to withdraw students to homeschool, that the appropriate offices confirm receipt of those letters and that students are subsequently withdrawn with a "WO5" withdrawal code when the requirements are not met. The District will ensure proper documentation is in place.

Pursuant to this corrective action plan, the District has retrained staff on issues related to dropout prevention, the withdrawal and coding of seniors unlikely to graduate and each staff member's specific role and responsibilities in ensuring that these practices meet the highest standard of compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

The District has not only attempted to cure the alleged procedural errors, but has been successful in doing so. In fact, the record reveals that only 24 Seniors were withdrawn to homeschool as W24 in 2016-2017. There were 90 students withdrawn as W26 in 2016-2017.

As demonstrated by this quick and substantial reduction in homeschool enrollment, As the Deputy Superintendent, the District corrected the cited defects without hesitation and has demonstrated a sincere desire to ensure that these issues do not arise again in the future.

Conclusion

This matter has been taken very seriously by me based upon the allegations alleged. As previously communicated, I remain ready to meet with you in person to further discuss your investigation and the significance of the attached documentation.

I look very forward to hearing from you and bringing this matter to a conclusion.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cynthia Saunders", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cynthia Saunders
Deputy Superintendent
Manatee County School District
(352) 427-1588 (mobile)

Enclosures

SECTION 2



October 30, 2017

VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS

Mike Blackburn
Florida Department of Education
Office of Inspector General
325 Gaines Street, Suite 1201
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Case No.: 2016-0010

Dear Mr. Blackburn,

Please accept this letter as the School District of Manatee County's written response to the Draft Report dated September 18, 2017, Case Number 2016-0010, ("Report"), in which it is concluded that Manatee County School District Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Saunders directed staff to code students pursuing their GED as home education students to create falsely inflated graduation rates. This conclusion is **invalid** and without any basis. The District has carefully reviewed and considered the entire investigative record and its data as it relates to these allegations. That review clearly demonstrated that Ms. Saunders did not engage in the behavior of which she has been accused.

- In 2010-2011, Ms. Saunders was trained as a high school principal in Marion County on the withdrawal to homeschool process and on proper withdrawal codes.
- In 2013-2014, Ms. Saunders implemented those processes in Manatee County as Executive Director of Secondary Education.
- At no time, did Ms. Saunders have any reason to doubt or question her prior training and the implementation of those processes in Manatee County.
- It was not until October 2016 that Ms. Saunders was put on notice of any concern by the Florida Department of Education ("FLDOE") regarding the homeschool process. Upon notice of a potential issue, Ms. Saunders immediately directed that an audit be conducted.
- It was determined that the issue was mostly isolated to only one school in the District—Horizons Academy. In 2014-2015, over 80% of students coded as W24 (Home Education) came from Horizons. That number increased over 88% from Horizons in 2015-2016. The District immediately implemented corrective action and safeguards to ensure that the enrollment process was being correctly followed.
- Due to Ms. Saunders' commitment to improved processes and procedures with the intention of ensuring compliance, the number of Seniors withdrawn to homeschool

decreased from 121 students in 2015-2016 to **only 24 Seniors withdrawn to homeschool in 2016-2017**—a decrease of over 80%.

- There was no gain to the District financially or otherwise based on Horizons' failure to comply with these processes.

The allegations of wrongdoing by Ms. Saunders are without any basis and the complaint should be closed as unsubstantiated.

Ms. Saunders' Employment History

Ms. Saunders began her employment with the District in 2013, when she was hired as Executive Director of Secondary Education. Prior to that time, Ms. Saunders' experience in education was in Marion County, where she had been employed as a Principal. In 2010/2011, while Ms. Saunders was employed in Marion County, then Superintendent of that District James Yancey evaluated the impact of withdrawal codes on graduation rates in Marion County.¹ Mr. Yancey's process for administrators was that if a parent and a child decide that they would like to enroll in home education, a parent should complete a home education form at the base school and that form would then be sent to the Home Education office. The student would then be reclassified as code W24 (Home Education). Those students are not counted as part of the cohort for graduation rates.

Like all other Principals in Marion County at the time, Mr. Yancey trained Ms. Saunders that this was the appropriate process for Home Education. Ms. Saunders also understood that the FLDOE requires that school personnel have an exit interview with students who are considering whether to leave traditional education. Ms. Saunders was familiar with the Exit Interview Student Survey form provided by FLDOE to school districts to use for this purpose.² At question 4, this form instructs districts to ask students what actions were taken to keep the student enrolled in school. Among the encouraged actions are student counseling, discussion of consequences for dropping out (including loss of a driver's license), discussion of options for continuing education in a different environment ("e.g., Adult Education, homeschool, virtual school, hospital homebound") and discussion and offering of alternative options for graduation (e.g., diploma options, GED Exit Option or GED Testing). Marion County instructed Ms. Saunders that if the student and parent did not wish to pursue traditional education but were unsure of which alternative option to pursue, the school could suggest that they enroll in home education to maintain driving privileges and avoid other consequences of dropping out while they make this decision. This is a very important decision for both the parent and student as the District cannot permit the student to return to the traditional setting once they decide to drop out. To enroll in home education, the parent must complete a form confirming the desire to homeschool and must agree to comply with the requirements of homeschool education. Ms. Saunders was informed in Marion County that these students should be coded as W24 (Home Education).

Once the student is enrolled in homeschool education, the parents retain ultimate authority and control over their child's education. As defined by Florida Statutes, a "home education program" is "the sequentially progressive instruction of a student *directed by his or her parents*" in order to satisfy statutory attendance requirements. Fla. Stat. § 1002.01(1) (emphasis added). As

¹ Exhibit 1, Letter to Oscar Restrepo from Susan Seigle dated Oct. 26, 2016.

² Exhibit 2, Exit Interview Student Survey.

such, parents maintain full discretion over the educational path chosen for their child and are responsible for maintaining a portfolio of records and materials over the course of this schooling. See Fla. Stat. § 1002.41(1)(b). "Nothing in this section shall require the district school superintendent to inspect the portfolio." *Id.*

Based on her prior experience and training in Marion County, when Ms. Saunders accepted the position as Executive Director of Secondary Education in Manatee County, Ms. Saunders sought to ensure that the appropriate processes were being followed as it related to homeschooling. At the time that Ms. Saunders arrived in Manatee County, the District had only one option for parents who wished to homeschool. Those parents would have to go to the Office of Student Assignment ("OSA") and complete a form. For many, the requirement to go to the OSA in person to complete the form was inconvenient based on its location and a potential deterrent for those who desired homeschooling. Ms. Saunders adopted the process that she learned in Marion County, and implemented the opportunity for parents who wished to homeschool to notify their base school of that intention. The base school was to then send the paperwork, completed by the parents, to the OSA. Students were then to be coded as W24 only upon completion and receipt of this paperwork.

In 2013-2014, the District did not allow for underage (students younger than 18) to take the GED. Ms. Saunders worked to implement a program to assist those students who desired to pursue their GED when underage. She also sought to ensure that the required exit interview process was being completed as it should be. Ms. Saunders explained to principals that when a student is at risk of dropping out, the student should be counseled at the school level about the options for continuing education and the consequences of dropping out of school. One of those options was home education. Another was to take the GED. If a student was unsure of a desired path, it was to be explained to the student and parent that a homeschooling program was an option while the student determined which direction he/she would like to go. Ultimately, as explained in the FLDOE's Frequently Asked Questions, students can choose to achieve a GED to culminate their home education program.³ Regardless, all those who chose to be homeschooled must comply with the Florida Statutes and the requirements for homeschooling. Ms. Saunders noted that students must not only enroll but also "perform and work on those things that they say they are" to receive the benefits of home education.⁴ Those students would be coded as W24 (Home Education).

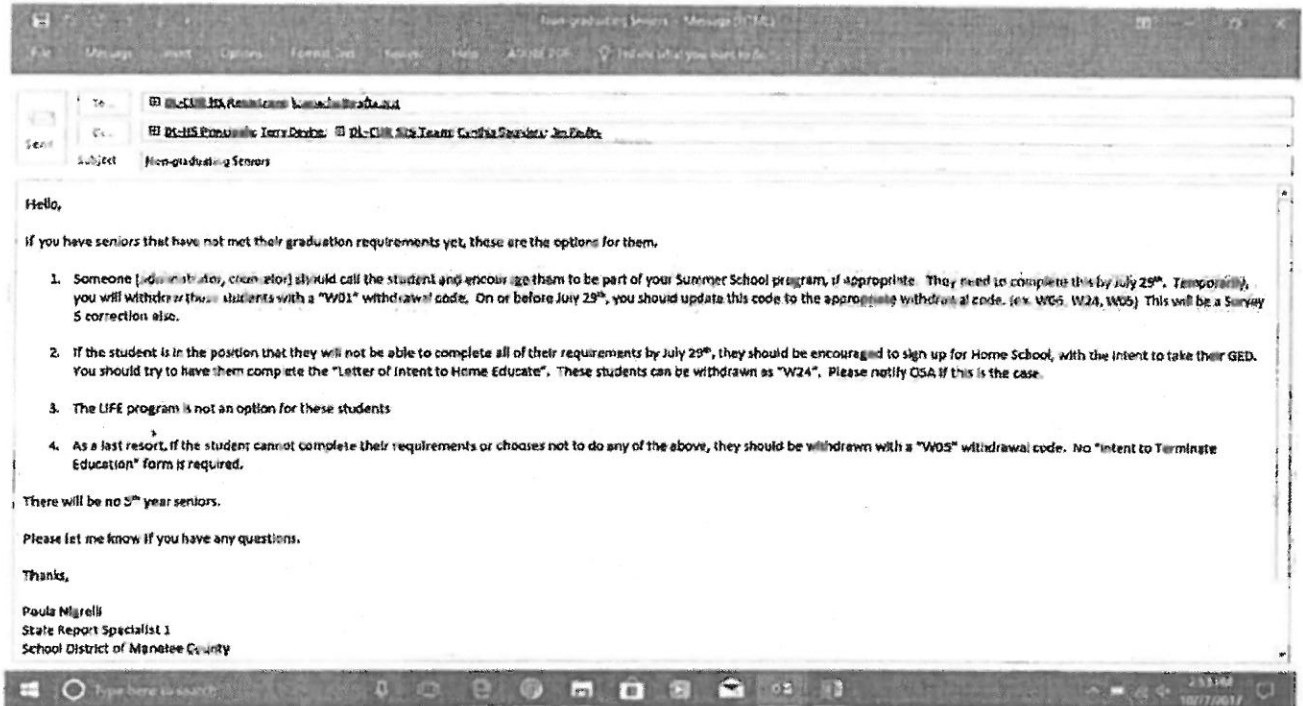
The highest-achieving moment in any child's primary education is high school graduation. As such, school districts statewide want to ensure that students are being offered every possible opportunity to meet that achievement. **An intent to falsely inflate graduation rates should not be confused with a school district's intent to provide students with as many options as possible to achieve educational success and hopefully pursue post-secondary education.**

The District's process to assist parents and students who are struggling to help them to identify the best path to achieve their ultimate goals was outlined in an email authored by Paula Nigrelli on June 15, 2016, prior to any indication from FLDOE that there was any concern about homeschool enrollment or graduation rates in the District. This process included follow up to

³ Exhibit 3, FLDOE Frequently Asked Questions at #23.

⁴ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 12:05 on Track 1 Disc 4 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

ensure proper coding as a dropout should the student not follow the path that the parent and student informed the District that they would.



This process follows the guidance provided by the FLDOE, as demonstrated by its Exit Interview Form and the FAQs at #23. Investigators Jeremy Billington and Cynthia Wright interviewed Ms. Saunders on April 25, 2017, and again on August 22, 2017, to discuss the FLDOE's concerns regarding the "perception" that the District is intentionally enrolling students in home education to increase the District's graduation rate. When asked about the District's procedure regarding withdrawal and placement of seniors seeking alternative educational options, Ms. Saunders explained the process. Seniors who are unlikely to graduate first meet with counselors or other administrators to discuss options for continuing their education after senior year. The District does not allow general education students to return to the traditional setting for a fifth year, so seniors must seek alternative venues to continue traditional education. Ms. Saunders indicated that seniors may continue traditional education as a homeschool student and can enroll in one of the District's Virtual Education Programs such as Florida Virtual School or eTech School of Manatee to obtain a traditional diploma.⁵ Ms. Saunders further explained that parents who choose to enroll their children in home education must complete a written letter of intent.⁶ Per statutory requirements, parents need only submit this intent in writing and need not use the District's "Letter of Intent" created for this purpose. See Fla. Stat. § 1002.41(1)(a).

⁵ http://www.manateeschools.net/pages/SDMC/_Schools/Virtual_Schools/Manatee_Virtual_Education_Summ

⁶ Exhibit 4, Letter of Intent to Home Educate. The District makes this form available to interested parents on its website:

http://www.manateeschools.net/pages/SDMC/Departments/Teaching_Learning/Parent_Information_Center/_Services/Home_Education

Ms. Saunders recognized this parental responsibility in stating that, "as long as [the parents] are providing what they're doing and working on, we have to give them access to [homeschool] if they want it."⁷ Choice Program Specialist Alicia Carillo similarly recognized parental accountability with respect to homeschool education.⁸

Alternatively, seniors may elect to take the GED, in which case the student would be withdrawn from school and coded as a W26.

The investigators asked whether students seeking their GED were coded as homeschool students. Ms. Saunders explained that these were "two different things."⁹ Some students go straight into the GED program (W26) while others are unsure of which path they are going to take. When Investigator Wright responded that students are "either GED or you're home ed.," Ms. Saunders explained further -- some students complete preparatory and remedial courses online while enrolled in home education. Such courses include preparation not only for the GED, but also American College Testing ("ACT"), the "Scholastic Aptitude Test ("SAT") or any other preparatory testing platform.¹⁰ Ms. Saunders explained that she is not aware of anything that prevents a student from doing so while enrolled in homeschool education.

As Ms. Saunders noted, students who indicate that they are going into the GED program are to be coded as W26. In fact, the data proves that:

126 students were coded as W26 in 2014-2015
78 students were coded as W26 in 2015-2016
90 students were coded as W26 in 2016-2017

Data also revealed a serious concern arising out of Horizons Academy ("Horizons"), an alternative education school for students with disciplinary issues. Notably, as an alternative school, Horizons does not receive a school grade. The District is appreciative of the inquiry by FLDOE in October 2016 because the audit conducted in response revealed that Horizons was **not** following the process that had been put in place in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 regarding homeschooling and proper use of withdrawal codes. Horizons has many students who come and go, as the school is an alternative for students who are suspended or expelled from school. Students are assigned to the school for finite periods of time and the paperwork related to transfers and withdrawals is voluminous.

The District learned during the initial audit that Horizons was not following the process as set forth by Ms. Saunders by failing to properly consult with parents, failing to obtain appropriate documentation from parents and failing to send those letters that it did obtain to the Office of Student Assignment ("OSA"). Supervisor of Student Demographics Daniel Lundeen explained, "I don't think it was intentional, I think it was just sloppy." Notably however, Mr. Lundeen continues to say, "it was particularly one school that didn't necessarily understand, that didn't have two or three kids to deal with to try to sort through, they had a big bundle of kids that was massive,

⁷ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 11:09 on Track 1 Disc 4 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

⁸ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 16:55 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

⁹ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 6:12 on Track 1 Disc 4 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

¹⁰ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 9:11 on Track 1 Disc 4 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

difficult to find, difficult to track down.”¹¹ Horizons also was coding many students as W24 near the end of the school year. Ms. Saunders never approved this practice. In fact, Ms. Saunders was not aware it was even happening. The Assistant Principal, David Marshall, was overseeing the process. He is no longer with the District. That practice was not in line with the District’s process nor was the failure to ensure parental consultation and confirm the parents’ intent to homeschool the students.

Of significance is the fact that it was not until after the FLDOE alerted the District to an inquiry in October/November 2016, that Ms. Carillo first reported that schools were not properly following the procedures to obtain parent signatures prior to home education enrollment. Ms. Saunders immediately implemented a corrective action plan, requiring Ms. Carillo from that point forward to:

1. Pull weekly reports of withdrawal codes;
2. Follow up with the schools when the school failed to send over a parental notice of intent to homeschool; and
3. Notify the schools that they were required to correct the student’s code in those instances where the school did not obtain the notice of intent.¹²

This corrective action resulted in a decline in the number of Seniors withdrawn to homeschool to only 24 students in 2016-2017. The corrective action implemented after the FLDOE inquiry was effective.

The allegation that Ms. Saunders directed staff to code students pursuing their GED as home education students to create falsely inflated graduation rates is unfounded. At no time did Ms. Saunders give any such direction. In fact, as noted above, hundreds of students were coded as GED. If Ms. Saunders had directed staff to code students pursuing GED as home education, those hundreds of students would not have been coded as W26 but rather W24. They were not.

As explained in the June 15, 2016, email, Ms. Saunders directed the principals to speak with their registrars and counselors to train them on the exit interview requirements provided by FLDOE and she spoke with Ms. Carillo to ensure that Ms. Carillo properly trained staff to follow the appropriate homeschool process as set forth in Florida Statutes.¹³ If the training Ms. Saunders received was not correct and it is FLDOE’s position that students who are unsure of their path cannot enroll in a homeschool program while they consider their options and take remedial courses, Ms. Saunders repeatedly explained that the District would change that practice.¹⁴

Emails between Ms. Saunders and Ms. Carillo confirm that Ms. Saunders never received notice or concerns regarding the alleged miscoding of GED students as homeschool students prior to the beginning of the FLDOE’s investigation. In an email dated November 3, 2016 from Ms. Carillo to Mr. Lundeen, Ms. Carillo outlined the following timeline of events regarding the FLDOE’s investigation:

¹¹ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 11:15 on Track 3 Disc 2 of Exhibit 14 to the Report.

¹² This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 26:11 on Track 1 Disc 5 of Exhibit 21 to the Report

¹³ Exhibit 5, PowerPoint Presentation by A. Carillo on Homeschool Enrollment Process.

¹⁴ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 25:11 on Track 1 Disc 5 of Exhibit 21 to the Report

- On October 21, 2016, Ms. Carillo received a phone call from Investigator Billington, confirming that Ms. Carillo was the appropriate contact with respect to an audit of 144 homeschools pulled from survey 4.
- On October 24, 2016, Ms. Carillo consulted with David Lesnek, the District's IT Systems Manager, to obtain links to send to Investigator Billington.
- On October 28, 2016, Investigator Billington emailed Ms. Carillo, requesting that she call him. Over the phone, Investigator Billington requested several items including parent contact information, letters of intent and annual evaluations for a list of students. According to Ms. Carillo, she then realized that the list was for students *withdrawn* to homeschool—not students enrolled in homeschool.
- On October 31, 2016, Ms. Carillo called Mr. Lundeen to inform him that records showed that the “bulk” of students were not enrolled in homeschool.¹⁵

As this timeline demonstrates, Ms. Carillo only notified Ms. Saunders of issues concerning *enrollment* of homeschool students in late October/early November 2016, after the FLDOE contacted Ms. Carillo. In fact, and as noted in the Report, Ms. Carillo did not ask Ms. Saunders about students pursuing their GED being coded as withdrawn to home education until November 9, 2016—several weeks *after* Ms. Carillo's first contact with Investigator Billington.¹⁶ During her interview with Investigator Billington, Ms. Carillo also indicated that she did not discover that many letters of intent to withdraw students into homeschool were not reaching her office *until* Investigator Billington requested the audit report.¹⁷

At no time was Ms. Saunders “manipulating the data,” “pushing numbers in a way to make the [District] look better,” and “shuffling things around,”¹⁸ by coding students as homeschool (W24) when they really should be coded as GED (W26).

During Ms. Saunders' April 25th interview, the Investigators advised Ms. Saunders to seek advice from FLDOE's GED Program Manager Diane Vaccari or FLDOE's Bureau Chief of Budget, Accountability and Assessment Tara Goodman. Ms. Saunders responded, “I can assure you we have no problem changing the communication moving forward to anything and we'll call them, get guidance, put something in place.”¹⁹

True to her assurances, Ms. Saunders called Ms. Vaccari the next day. Following the call, Ms. Vaccari sent Ms. Saunders the applicable rules and statutes discussed.²⁰ The information discussed and sent was the same information Ms. Saunders relied upon in adopting the procedures as a Principal in Marion County and in continuing the practice in Manatee County.²¹ Each District is to implement its own process as it relates to the underage GED program.

¹⁵ Exhibit 6, November 3, 2016 email, FW: File transfer sites.

¹⁶ See page 9 of the Report.

¹⁷ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 9:22 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

¹⁸ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 19:00 on Track 1 Disc 4 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

¹⁹ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 36:47 on Track 1 Disc 4 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

²⁰ Exhibit 7, April 26, 2017 email, requested statute/rules.

²¹ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 22:42 on Track 1 Disc 5 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

As demonstrated by the many potential choices for students outlined and endorsed by the FLDOE, student needs are diverse and not easily categorized—or codable. As a Principal, Ms. Saunders looked to higher-level administrators for guidance. As Deputy Superintendent, Ms. Saunders looked to the FLDOE for guidance. Based upon years of guidance from multiple avenues—and absent any corrective guidance or instruction indicating otherwise—Ms. Saunders continued using the same process. Even after seeking additional guidance following her first interview on April 24, 2017, Ms. Saunders was not told that these methods were incorrect. As such, Ms. Saunders held a good faith belief that she could rely upon guidance received from other administrators and FLDOE materials in providing direction to her staff, and more importantly, providing direction to students in need of individualized educational support. Ms. Saunders’ did not direct any miscoding to inflate graduation rates.

Improper Conclusions and Mischaracterization of Testimony in the Report

1. Interview Testimony

The Report relies upon the testimony of numerous District employees interviewed by Investigator Billington and Investigator Wright, suggesting that the portions of interviews included support the Report’s substantiation of the allegation. However, a comparison of the actual recorded interview testimony and the Report’s summaries demonstrates that the statements that were actually made in the interviews fail to support the conclusions made.

For example, the Report states that numerous interviewees identified Ms. Saunders as the individual who directed staff to “code GED students as home education.”²² Contrary to this finding, none of the interviewees directly identified Ms. Saunders as the individual who issued this directive.²³ In fact, the interviewees failed to identify *any* individual who directed staff to inflate graduation rates—falsely, fraudulently, maliciously, or otherwise. Indeed, when asked whether they believed that Ms. Saunders intentionally implemented the procedures at issue to falsely inflate graduation rates, interviewees said “no.”²⁴

The Report further indicates that numerous interviewees stated that they withdrew students as homeschool if the students were pursuing their GED.²⁵ This is inaccurate. To the contrary, when asked about coding practices, interviewees distinguished between two categories of students: W26

²² See e.g., pages 10 (interview of Alicia Carillo and Danny Lundeen), and 12 (interview of Andrea Dawsey) of the Report.

²³ See e.g., conversations beginning at 16:30, 18:18 and 20:20 on Track 2, Disc 1 (interview of Andrea Dawsey, Exhibit 16 to the Report); conversation beginning at 9:42 on Track 1, Disc 2 (interview of Shari Stanton, Exhibit 18 to the Report); conversations beginning at 5:23 and 15:09 on Track 1, Disc 1 (interview of Alicia Carillo, Exhibit 13 to the Report); conversation beginning at 7:20 on Track 3, Disc 2 (interview of Danny Lundeen, Exhibit 14 to the Report).

²⁴ See e.g., conversation beginning at 26:20 on Track 2, Disc 1 (interview of Andrea Dawsey, Exhibit 16 to the Report); conversation beginning at 12:30 on Track 1, Disc 2 (interview of Shari Stanton, Exhibit 18 to the Report); conversations beginning at 22:53 and 24:52 on Track 2, Disc 2 (interview of Don Sauer and Verona Bostic, Exhibit 17 to the Report); conversation beginning at 11:35 on Track 3, Disc 2 (interview of Danny Lundeen, Exhibit 14 to the Report).

²⁵ See e.g., pages 12 (interviews of Andrea Dawsey and Veronica Bostic), 13 (interview of Paula Nigrelli), 14 (interview of Shari Stinton) of the Report.

and W24.²⁶ None of the interviewees stated that they coded *all* GED students as home education students as suggested by the Report. Indeed, the uncontroverted data proves that they did not: 126 students were coded as W26 in 2014-2015; 78 students were coded as W26 in 2015-2016.

Similar contradictions and discrepancies also exist between the summarized interview and recorded testimony of Choice Program Specialist Alicia Carillo. For example, the Report's interview summary indicates that, "Ms. Carillo stated that Ms. Saunders directed schools to withdraw students trying to get their GED into home education." However, Ms. Carillo's testimony does not support this conclusion.

Investigator Billington: You mentioned there was an uptick in—as we all know—of the homeschool students. Can you explain to me in your words why do you think that happened?

Ms. Carillo: Why do *I* think that happened?

Investigator Billington: Yeah.

Ms. Carillo: Because there was a move—administrative—to try to get students that were failing—or not in line with graduating with their cohort year...into alternative programs.

Investigator Billington: Ok. You say administratively, who exactly is that?

Ms. Carillo: I would say district directors and up.

Investigator Billington: Ok. So, Daniel Lundeen and the superintendent Dr. Greene are the two of the ones...you're referring to.

Ms. Carillo: Daniel Lundeen does not decide on procedures regarding alternative placements or anything like that. That is at the principal director level and higher.

Investigator Billington: Ok...But they had to get some kind of supervision to do that, correct? They wouldn't, schools wouldn't take that upon themselves. I'm assuming, right?

Ms. Carillo: Yes. Absolutely.

Investigator Billington: Then who would direct them to do that?

²⁶ See e.g., conversation beginning at 17:07 on Track 2, Disc 2 (interview of Veronica Bostic, Exhibit 17 to the Report); conversation beginning at 8:19 on Track 1, Disc 2 (interview of Shari Stinton and Carl Auckerman), conversation beginning at 15:42 (interview of Andrea Dawsey).

Ms. Carillo: Directives are usually from what I have seen historically it was the director of secondary schools for middle and high school that speaks at the principal meetings. I believe it's once a week they have the principal meetings and directives come down that way.

Investigator Billington: Ok. So somebody at that meeting directed them, "hey, we need to start moving these kids around because we're not looking so hot"—is that fair to say?

Ms. Carillo: I would think so.²⁷

Ms. Carillo does not say that this was said. It is pure speculation. She never attended the principal meetings. She does not have any knowledge that any such directive was ever given.

When Investigator Billington later asks Ms. Carillo whether Ms. Saunders directed schools to "shift things around," Ms. Carillo responds, "I know. I have an email." However, Ms. Carillo later clarifies that this email is "not directly from [Ms. Saunders]. But, it *alludes* to a directive."²⁸

A good portion of Ms. Carillo's testimony is *not* included in the Report's summary. For example, in answering Investigator Billington's questions regarding the gap between parental intent and subsequent homeschool enrollment, Ms. Carillo stated:

Yes, you can get your GED while you're under homeschool, that is in option that you have if that's what you want because homeschool doesn't offer a diploma, but that's not what you signed up for to go get a GED.²⁹

This is consistent with Ms. Saunders' understanding that students may obtain their GED while enrolled in home education.

The Report's interview summary indicates that, "Ms. Carillo stated that she told Ms. Saunders the process was being done incorrectly," suggesting that Ms. Saunders had knowledge of issues regarding the alleged miscoding of GED students prior to this investigation. Contrary to this suggestion however, Ms. Carillo did not ask Ms. Saunders about students pursuing their GED being coded as withdrawn to home education until **November 9, 2016**—several weeks *after* Ms. Carillo's first contact with Investigator Billington.³⁰

In fact, Ms. Carillo explained that she did not discover that parents' letters of intent to homeschool were not reaching her office until Investigator Billington requested the audit report.³¹ Notably, Ms. Carillo's job duties do not require her to review this information. As such, she did not have any need to review this information—or the opportunity to notice any issues—until first

²⁷ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 5:23 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

²⁸ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 15:09 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

²⁹ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 11:33 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

³⁰ See page 9 of the Report.

³¹ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 9:22 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

prompted by Investigator Billington. Ms. Carillo admits as much during her interview in stating, "we really didn't know about the withdrawals. Unless we're getting a letter of intent we're not looking for withdrawals."³²

The Report's reliance on this implied timeline in substantiating the allegation against Ms. Saunders is misleading as Ms. Carillo clearly did not have knowledge that such issues existed *until Investigator Billington requested the audit and the investigation into the matter had already begun*. This is especially worth noting since you indicated on the phone last week that the basis for the finding of intent was that Ms. Saunders did not investigate whether her understanding of the process was appropriate when subordinates questioned the process. As evidenced by the testimony of Ms. Carillo and others, no one ever questioned the withdrawal code procedures until after the FLDOE investigation began. Yet, the Draft Report concludes that an intentional act occurred in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, long before anyone ever questioned the correctness of these procedures.

Ms. Saunders duplicated a procedure taught to her as a principal in Marion County. Without prior notification from subordinates, the FLDOE or anyone else, Ms. Saunders simply had no reason to question and no basis to believe that these procedures were improper. Thus, the Report's substantiation of the allegation that Ms. Saunders implemented a procedure to falsely inflate graduation rates is unfounded. Without any knowledge that these procedures were incorrect, Ms. Saunders simply could not have intentionally used or manipulated these procedures to achieve a fraudulent goal.

2. Factors Impacting Homeschool Enrollment Numbers in 2014-15 and 2015-16

The Report states that from the 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 school year, the "number of seniors withdrawn to home education in Manatee County increased over 700%."³³ The conclusion is made in a vacuum. Ms. Saunders explained significant factors that impacted homeschool enrollment, yet the Report fails to address these variables.

It bears noting that the District was in a state of turmoil when Ms. Saunders first began. Indeed, six different superintendents worked in the District between 2012 and 2016. Superintendent Tim McGonegal resigned in September 2012. Superintendent Rick Mills abruptly resigned in April 2015. Inconsistent leadership inevitably leads to inconsistent procedures and inconsistent monitoring, review and training on those procedures. As a result, Ms. Saunders entered the District at a time when it was facing many challenges. Under the leadership of Dr. Greene and Ms. Saunders, the District worked diligently to evaluate its practices to improve its ability to best serve its students within the confines of applicable laws, rules and regulations.

A. Closure of Central High and Manatee Y Tech

One factor contributing to the rise in homeschool enrollment was the closure of two alternative high schools, Central High School and Manatee Y Tech, in 2013 and 2014. These

³² This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 12:30 on Track 1 Disc 1 of Exhibit 13 to the Report.

³³ See page 8 of the Report.

closures caused students "to be scattered about."³⁴ As a result, Horizons, an alternative school focused on the education of students with behavioral issues, and homeschool education became the only remaining options for Central High and Manatee Y students to continue traditional education through alternative venues. Not all former Central High School and Manatee Y Tech students had behavioral issues however. Therefore, home education became the only option for those students that wanted to continue traditional education in an alternative setting. These circumstances contributed to a rise in homeschool enrollment.

B. Changes in Enrollment Process

By allowing parents to enroll students in homeschool education at their base school as opposed to having to travel to the OSA to register for homeschool, parents had better access to the enrollment process.

C. Horizons Academy

As discussed in detail above, the District discovered during the initial audit prompted by the FLDOE investigation that Horizons did not follow the procedures put in place by Ms. Saunders by failing to send, monitor compliance and maintain parental letters of intent to homeschool. The record reveals that **96 of the 119 Seniors coded as W24 during the 2015-2016 school year were Horizons students—more than 80%.** The record similarly reveals that **90 of the 102 Seniors coded as W24 during the 2014-2015 school year were Horizons students—more than 88%.**

It bears noting that those students who are charged with possession of firearms are transferred to Florida Virtual School. Even those students and their parents must go through the homeschool process. As a result of the audit that was conducted, it came to the District's attention that Horizons was not properly complying with the homeschool process for these students either.

The data demonstrates that Horizons Seniors coded as W24 vastly outnumbered W24 Seniors from other District schools. Horizons is one of eight high schools in the District. These issues were clearly not district-wide as suggested by the Report. The District subsequently and promptly dealt with these issues by implementing a corrective action plan and the Assistant Principal charged with overseeing the process at Horizons no longer works there. The success of these corrective actions is evidenced by the withdrawal of only 24 seniors (22 of which were Horizons students) in 2016-2017. It is important to note that Horizons is an alternative school and therefore, receives no "school grade" from the State.

The Report assumes that 100% of students coded as W24 were miscoded. There is no support for that finding. Mr. Lundeen explained that Horizons' paperwork issues, although "sloppy," were not intentional. The Report acknowledges that the District possessed statutorily required documentation evidencing the parents' intent to homeschool for at least some of its home education students. The Report also acknowledges that the OIG did not speak with any of the 121 seniors withdrawn to home education during the 2014-2015 school year.³⁵ As for those parents

³⁴ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 4:45 on Track 1 Disc 5 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

³⁵ See page 8 of the Report.

that the investigator did allegedly speak with, at least 35% confirmed that they did in fact homeschool their children.

D. No 5th Year Seniors

In 2014-15, the District implemented a policy prohibiting students from attending high school for a fifth (5th) year. Ms. Nigrelli's June 15, 2016, email, speaks to that fact. When students have not completed their required credits at the time of regular graduation, those students are not permitted to come back to school for a fifth year. Instead, they must seek alternative options—one of which is homeschool.

Each of these factors impacted the District's home education process and enrollment numbers. As such, the overall conclusion that an alleged intent to falsely increase graduation rates caused the alleged "700% increase" in home education enrollment is simply unfounded.

3. Corrective Actions Already Taken

The District took corrective actions upon completion of its audit. Specifically, the District immediately implemented a corrective action plan to ensure that only those students that go through the proper procedures are coded as W24 and are subsequently recoded as W05 if a student later fails to follow the procedural requirements. For example, Ms. Carillo is now required to follow up with the parent and current school of enrollment to confirm the parents' intent to withdraw the student into homeschool education.³⁶ Prior to the audit, neither the District nor Florida statute required such confirmation. During her April 25th interview, Ms. Saunders also explained these new safeguards and confirmed their implementation.³⁷

Moving forward, the District will continue implementing and improving upon this corrective action plan by including additional safeguards to ensure that those parents who desire to homeschool their children correctly complete letters of intent to withdraw students to homeschool, that the appropriate offices confirm receipt of those letters and that students are subsequently withdrawn with a "W05" withdrawal code when the requirements are not met. Pursuant to this corrective action plan, the District also intends to re-train staff on issues related to dropout prevention, the withdrawal and coding of seniors unlikely to graduate and each staff member's specific role and responsibilities in ensuring that these practices meet the highest standard of compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. If the FLDOE desires it, the District will submit attendance records for those trainings.

The District has not only attempted to cure the alleged procedural errors, but has been successful in doing so. **In fact, the record reveals that only 24 Seniors were withdrawn to homeschool as W24 in 2016-2017.** The record also reveals that there are 90 students withdrawn as W26 in 2016-2017. As demonstrated by this quick and substantial reduction in homeschool enrollment, the District corrected the cited defects without hesitation and has demonstrated a sincere desire to ensure that these issues do not arise again in the future.

³⁶ Exhibit 5, PowerPoint Presentation by A. Carillo on Homeschool Enrollment Process.

³⁷ This conversation can be heard in full beginning at around 27:49 on Track 1 Disc 5 of Exhibit 21 to the Report.

Following the FLDOE's audit and investigation, the District recognized that its practices needed to be reevaluated and has since embraced and utilized the FLDOE's findings as an opportunity to improve upon and correct past practices. As previously noted, these issues dominantly stemmed from Horizons. As an alternative school, Horizons does not receive a school grade from the FLDOE. As such, these isolated issues did not benefit the District—financially or otherwise. The District has since dealt with and extinguished those issues. The District's prompt and continual implementation of its corrective action plan, done in-part under Ms. Saunders' direction, further undermines the allegation that Ms. Saunders intended to falsely inflate graduation rates. Rather, these actions demonstrate Ms. Saunders' unwavering effort to comply with FLDOE guidance in furtherance of her educational responsibilities to both District students and the State.

Conclusion

The allegations are unsubstantiated. The months of investigating this matter undoubtedly created substantial amounts of documentation, data and information. It is understandable that the Report cannot reference every single number, comment or statement relied upon or reflected in the record. There was no intention to falsely inflate graduation rates.

Ms. Saunders' responses remained consistent and unwavering throughout the entirety of the investigation.

- She was following the process by which she was trained in Marion County.
- She never had any reason to question or doubt her training.
- Upon being put on notice for the first time of any potential concern in late October/early November 2016, an audit was conducted. Issues regarding the failure to follow processes were identified--primarily at Horizons Academy. Corrective action and procedural safeguards were put in place immediately.
- The improvement in the process and the training were effective, resulting in only 24 Seniors being withdrawn to homeschool in 2016-2017.

Ultimately, the District continues to evaluate and revisit its procedures. The District will re-train its employees and has adopted the attached process to address any concerns.³⁸

³⁸ Exhibit 8, Dropout Prevention Guidelines.



Alvarez, Winthrop, Thompson & Storey, P.A.

October 26, 2016

Oscar Restrepo
Director of Investigations
Office of Inspector General
Florida Department of Education
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 1201
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Re: Complaint re Improper Withdrawal of Students, Marion County School District

Dear Mr. Restrepo:

This firm has been retained to investigate a complaint that was made to your office on July 19, 2016 ("the July 2016 Complaint"). The complaint was made by Nancy Stacy, a Marion County School Board member, speaking in her individual capacity based on an anonymous letter she had received regarding a counselor who had visited a relative's home when a student was not attending class. Mrs. Stacy accuses George Tomy, the current superintendent of the Marion County School District ("the District") of "government malfeasance." She contends that Mr. Tomy directed school administrators to withdraw failing or truant students from their high schools and enroll them in Home Education in order to inflate the graduation rates of the District.

I have thoroughly investigated these charges, and am of the opinion that there has not been any deliberate attempt by Mr. Tomy or any of the staff to falsify documentation to inflate graduation rates. Indeed, Mr. Tomy was not aware of any difficulties until Mrs. Stacy first raised the issue in a board work session in April, 2016. The staff immediately investigated the issues, and has provided me with their findings. As more fully explained below, what appears to have happened was that the procedures put in place by the prior superintendent¹ in 2010 were modified in 2011, but not all schools operated under the modified procedures. This resulted in students being improperly classified.

The staff, under Mr. Tomy's direction, has remedied the problem and has put into place procedures that will ensure that withdrawing students are properly classified, whether the student is withdrawn to Home Education, to a different school or an alternate program, or is a true drop-out.

In order to investigate the charges, I have been given quite a few materials describing the procedures in place in 2010, the modifications put into place in 2011, and the subsequent

¹ Mr. Tomy was elected in 2012.

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modifications that are now in effect. I have also met with Bobby James, the School Board Chair; Mr. Tomyn; Deputy Superintendent, Lisa Krysalika; the Director of School Counseling and Assessment, Jonathan McGowan; the Coordinator of Home Education and Virtual School, Paul Vowinkel; Vickye Vaughns, the Supervisor of the MIS Department; and Nancy Wirt, the FASTER Database Specialist for Marion County.

Before going into the specifics of my findings, please note that the issue is the impact of the classification of a student as a "drop-out" appears to be the underpinning of the July 2016 Complaint. If a student is classified as a drop-out, the fact that the student did not graduate impacts the graduation rate of the District because that student remains as part of the cohort for calculating graduation rates. However, if a student stops going to regular classes, but instead enrolls in Home Education, he is not classified as a drop-out, and he is taken out of the cohort for purposes of calculating the graduation rate. The same is true of students who enter the alternative diploma program, Smart Horizons. The only students whose classification negatively impacts the graduation rate is a true drop out.

It should also be noted that if a student is between the ages of 16 and 18, and is a drop out, that student is not eligible under Florida law to have a driver's license. See Florida Statutes §§322.05 and 322.091. On the other hand, these statutes permit a student enrolled in school, including Home Education, or who is involved with certain other activities set forth in the statutes, to have driving privileges.

The Florida Department of Education requires that school personnel have an exit interview with students who are contemplating leaving formal education, and have provided school districts with a two-page exit interview form. I have included a copy of this form with this correspondence as Enclosure 1. Please note, on the second page, above the area for the student's signature, the student must verify that the guidance counselor or other school personnel address with them the ramifications of leaving school, including revocation of driving privileges until the student turns 18.

Prior Procedures re Home Education Students

In 2010, in response to the State of Florida publishing and standardizing graduation rates of districts across Florida, the prior superintendent, James Yancey, convened a group of administrators to evaluate the withdrawal codes they were using to see what impact the codes had on graduation rates. A flow chart was created and put into use. I have included the 2010 flow chart as Enclosure 2.

On page 3 of Enclosure 2, the procedure to follow if a student and his parent decide to go to Home Education is found at the bottom of the page. The procedure was that a parent "should" complete a home ed form at the base school, and that the form would be sent to the Home Ed office. The base school would then reclassify the student as being in home education, which is a W24 classification. Students with W24 classifications are not counted as part of the cohort for purposes of calculating graduation rates.

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Problems arose because of the lack of checks and balances over what happened to students who may have informed their base school they were going to be home schooled, but who never showed up to formally register with the Home Education office. Under the 2010 system, that student would have been classified as a W24 as soon as he notified the base school of his intentions, whether he ever registered with the Home Education office.

A modification was made to the process in 2011, while James Yancey was still superintendent. A copy of the 2011 modification is included as Enclosure 3. The significant changes in this process was that a student would not be automatically classified as a W24 when he expressed his intention to leave the base school and be home schooled. Rather, the parent was informed to report to the Home Education office within five (5) days to turn in the completed paperwork. Once that paperwork was present to the Home Education office, the base school would be notified and the student would be officially withdrawn to W24 status.

Current Procedures

The current Superintendent, George Tomyn, was elected in 2012. He was unaware of any problems with classification of students as W24 until the issue was raised in April, 2016 by Nancy Stuey, the School Board Member who made the complaint to the Department of Education. Mr. Tomyn immediately convened a group of district level administrators to attempt to get to the bottom of the problems ("the 2016 Task Force").

The 2016 Task Force learned that not all of the schools were following the procedures set into place in 2011. Rather, they were still using the 2010 procedures, so there were a number of students who had been classified as W24 under that procedure who had not actually enrolled in home education. It appears that the problems arose because of communication failures in 2011 when the new procedures were put into place. It also appears that the problems arose under the prior administration, before Mr. Tomyn was elected in 2012.

As a result of the findings of the 2016 Task Force, a new procedure was put into place that contains a significant number of redundancies enacted to make sure students who express the desire to withdraw from conventional schools are properly classified. Enclosure 4 is the version of the procedure that is being put into place. The new procedure works as follows: the parent goes to the base school to notify them that they wish to withdraw that student to Home Education. The parent completes the notice of intent to establish a home education program, which is signed, dated, and stamped at the base school. A copy is returned to the parent, who is requested to submit it to the Home Education Office.

Additionally, the base school then scans the signed copy to the Home Education Office, and sends the original to the Home Education Office by courier. The base school also maintains a copy of the form in its files. The student is officially withdrawn using Code W24 for Home Education.

The Home Education department gets the paperwork, and attempts to meet with the parent to discuss options and requirements of a home education program. However, this meeting is not legally mandatory. Thus, there are now three measures in place to make sure the Home Education Office is notified of the intent of the parent to establish Home Education.

At this point, the parent is officially in charge of the student's education. The student is no longer part of the cohort for purposes of calculating graduation rates, and the classification cannot be changed if the parent continues to manage the student's curriculum. Indeed, many students never get diplomas from a school system, but if they pass appropriate college entrance examinations, go on to higher education without ever "graduating" from a high school.

If a home school student elects, however, to get a conventional diploma, he or she may re-enter Marion Virtual School or any school as a senior (or at any grade level) and complete his credit requirements through a virtual program. The District monitors the student's performance, and the student is transferred back to his base school. If he satisfies the credit requirements, he may participate in a graduation ceremony and may get a diploma like the rest of the students in his class. Once he returns, he is now part of the cohort for purposes of calculating graduation rates.

Example

Johnny Smith enters 9th grade in SY2011/2012. He will be in the cohort that graduates at the end of 2014/2015.

Johnny Smith turns 16 in November, 2011. He decides he is not cut-out for conventional classes in high school. He goes to the counselor, and is advised as to the options. He chooses to go to Home Education, and his parent will manage the curriculum for him. He is reclassified as W24, and all the appropriate paperwork is filed with the base school and with the Home Education office. He is also not counted in the 2014-2015 cohort for purposes of calculating graduation rates.

If he completes his high school education via Home Education, he may never get a high school diploma if he chooses not to, and can enroll in college with appropriate college entrance testing. He will never be part of the 2014-2015 cohort again.

Suppose he has problems. At the end of the first year of Home Ed (end of SY2011/2012), Johnny's progress is evaluated by a certified teacher, and is found to be wanting. He is then on probation for the next year, SY2012/2013. He is still classified as W24, because he is still in Home Education.

At the end of the next year, he has not worked up to the appropriate level. He is then ineligible to be in Home Education, and he has 5 days to re-enroll in a conventional school or alternative program. If he does not, a social work referral is made.

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If he does re-enroll in school, he still has a withdrawal code of W24, but he is now given an entry code of E04. This entry code is used for any PK-12 student who is enrolling in a public school in the district after having been in home education in any Florida school district. He is now counted back in the 2014-2015 cohort for graduation purposes.

There is a problem if the student does not re-enroll in any program with the district after being out in Home Education for two years and not succeeding. The student is now a true drop-out, and because he does not re-enroll, there is no way to give him an entry code. His code is W24, and MIS is not able to make changes to the W24 which was reported at the end of SY2011/2012, because the window for updates for that school year closed during the fall of 2012.

Because this last student does not re-enroll, he does not have an entry code that will be added back into the cohort for calculating graduation rates. Technically this student should be counted in this way, but there is no way for Marion County, or any other county in the State of Florida, to make the change to include him as a drop-out for calculating the graduation rate of his original cohort, SY2013/2014.

It is not clear to me that this is the scenario contemplated by the Complaint lodged by Ms. Stacy. If it is, there must be a change in the reporting system to permit MIS to change the classification to show that the student had entered Home Education, been unsuccessful, and not re-enrolled for purposes of getting an entry code. Without an entry code, the student cannot be included in the cohort as a drop-out. But if he has an entry code, he is not a drop-out. It is rather a "Catch 22" systemic problem.

In the scenario I have created, Johnny Smith would turn 18 during SY2013/2014, and if he did not come back after that school year, the school district would have no way to know why. He could be a true drop-out, but if he was, MIS could not create an entry code to add the student back into the cohort as a drop-out.

It is my understanding that officials of the Marion County School District have contacted the Department of Education regarding this anomaly, but have not received clarification as of the date of this letter.

Statistics

I note there was a concern that there was a significant increase one year in seniors enrolled in Home Education that were not offset by returning students, and that this was purposefully done to boost graduation rates for political advantage. I have asked for the statistics for the past several school years of students who had withdrawn from Home Education and those who had returned from Home Education. The statistics are as follows:

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SY2011/2012

W24 Codes (out to Home Education)

9 th grade	152
10 th grade	204
11 th grade	219
12 th grade	180

E04 Codes (back from Home Education)

9 th grade	151
10 th grade	166
11 th grade	155
12 th grade	134

SY2012/2013

W24 Codes

9 th grade	157
10 th grade	226
11 th grade	236
12 th grade	253

E04 Codes

9 th grade	122
10 th grade	159
11 th grade	131
12 th grade	144

SY2013/2014

W24:

9 th grade	134
10 th grade	213
11 th grade	235
12 th grade	233

E04

9 th grade	119
10 th grade	118
11 th grade	130
12 th grade	155

SY2014/2015

W24:

9 th grade	193
10 th grade	245
11 th grade	300
12 th grade	368

E04

9 th grade	66
10 th grade	77
11 th grade	68
12 th grade	68

Ms. Stacy brought this information to the attention of the current administration in April, 2016. Mr. Tomin immediately had the records reviewed, and discovered that of the 368 12th graders in the SY2014/2015 cohort who were classified with withdrawal code W24, 97 were duplicates. This duplication occurred because students went back and forth between Home Education and one of the schools in the District. If we deduct the duplication, the actual figure for the 12th graders withdrawn to Home Education in the SY2014/2015 cohort was 271.

Although this number is higher than the 12th graders in the previous cohort, if we look at the trend over the four years, the W24 codes are 180, 253, 233, 271. These numbers do not appear to be artificially inflated.

During this process, as more fully discussed above, the current administration also reviewed the enrollment folders of 12th graders in the SY2014/2015 cohort. They discovered at that time that different schools were using different guidelines, and that the system needed to be

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improved so that there were multiple checks and balances on how a withdrawing student was coded.

After speaking with everyone involved in the investigation, I believe the increase is because of the availability of virtual education for students who are not progressing appropriately in traditional classrooms. Indeed, both Mr. McGowan and Mr. Vowinkel informed me that students on the edge used to just tell the school they were going to drop out. Now, because of the availability and popularity of virtual education, more marginal students leave to study on their own.

I am also comfortable that the situation was not caused deliberately, but rather by inconsistency over the years in maintaining records. Once the issue was brought to the attention of the current administration, a new system was created with several redundancies to make sure that the documentation for a withdrawing student was appropriate, whether that student withdrew to Home Education or dropped out.


Conclusions

I have found nothing to show that there were any deliberate actions on behalf of the Superintendent, George Tomy, or any other administrator in the Marion County School System to inflate graduation rates artificially. I found no evidence to show a "skillfully orchestrated graduation rate inflation scheme" nor have I found any evidence that counselors or other school personnel attempted to improperly coerce failing or urgent students to enroll in Home Education to remove them from a cohort for purposes of calculation of graduation rates.

Indeed, it was not until Mrs. Stacy raised the issue that the personnel of the Marion County School District realized there was a problem. However, the problem was caused by actions which occurred before Mr. Tomy was elected, and was not readily apparent until April, 2016. I believe the actions taken to date to rectify the situation are appropriate.

If you have any questions, or if there is any additional information you need, please do not hesitate to call.

Very truly yours,



Susan M. Seigle

cc: Bobby James

Florida Department of Education
Exit Interview Student Survey

School Name _____ School District _____
Student Name _____ Student DOB _____
Grade Level _____ Date _____

Directions: Please circle the response that best describes your experience or provide a description of your experience in the space provided.

1. Which of the following best describes your primary reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

2. Which of the following best describes your secondary reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

3. What would have improved your chances of staying in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning)
- B. Better teachers
- C. Smaller classes
- D. More individualized instruction
- E. Better communication with your teachers
- F. Better communication with your parents
- G. Increased parental involvement
- H. Less freedom and more supervision from parents
- I. Less freedom and more supervision from school officials
- J. Other

4. What actions did your school personnel take to keep you enrolled in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Provided student counseling | I. Discussed and offered participation in a credit recovery course/program |
| B. Scheduled a conference with parent(s), guardian(s), student, and school staff | J. Discussed and offered access to Dropout Prevention Program(s) (e.g., alternative education, disciplinary, teenage parent) |
| C. Discussed and offered options for tutoring | K. Tracked student progress (by teacher, counselor, social worker, graduation coach, etc.) |
| D. Discussed the consequences of dropping out | L. Changed or revised course schedule |
| E. Discussed and offered options for continuing education in a different environment (e.g., Adult Education, home school, virtual school, hospital homebound) | M. Implemented intervention contracts (e.g., attendance or behavior) |
| F. Discussed and offered alternative options for graduation (e.g., diploma options, GED Exit Option or GED Testing) | N. Student reported that school staff took no action |
| G. Conducted home visits | O. Other |
| H. Referred student to agencies/programs to address problems interfering with school success (e.g., substance abuse counseling, psychological counseling, family counselor) | |

Please check and sign below to certify that each of the following statements was addressed by school personnel.

I am at least 16 years of age and it is my intent to terminate my school enrollment. I received counseling from a guidance counselor or other school personnel which addressed the following:

- ☐ Terminating school enrollment prior to graduation will likely reduce my potential earnings and negatively affect my career options.
- ☐ Termination of school enrollment will result in the revocation/denial of my driving privileges until age 18
- ☐ My reasons for leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Possible actions that could keep me from leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Options for continuing my education in a different environment, e.g., Adult Education or GED testing.
- ☐ For Bright Futures eligibility, GED students must complete credit requirements before taking GED exam.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
(If student is under 18 years of age)

School Personnel Signature: _____ Date: _____

Optional:

1. What is the highest level of education completed by your maternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

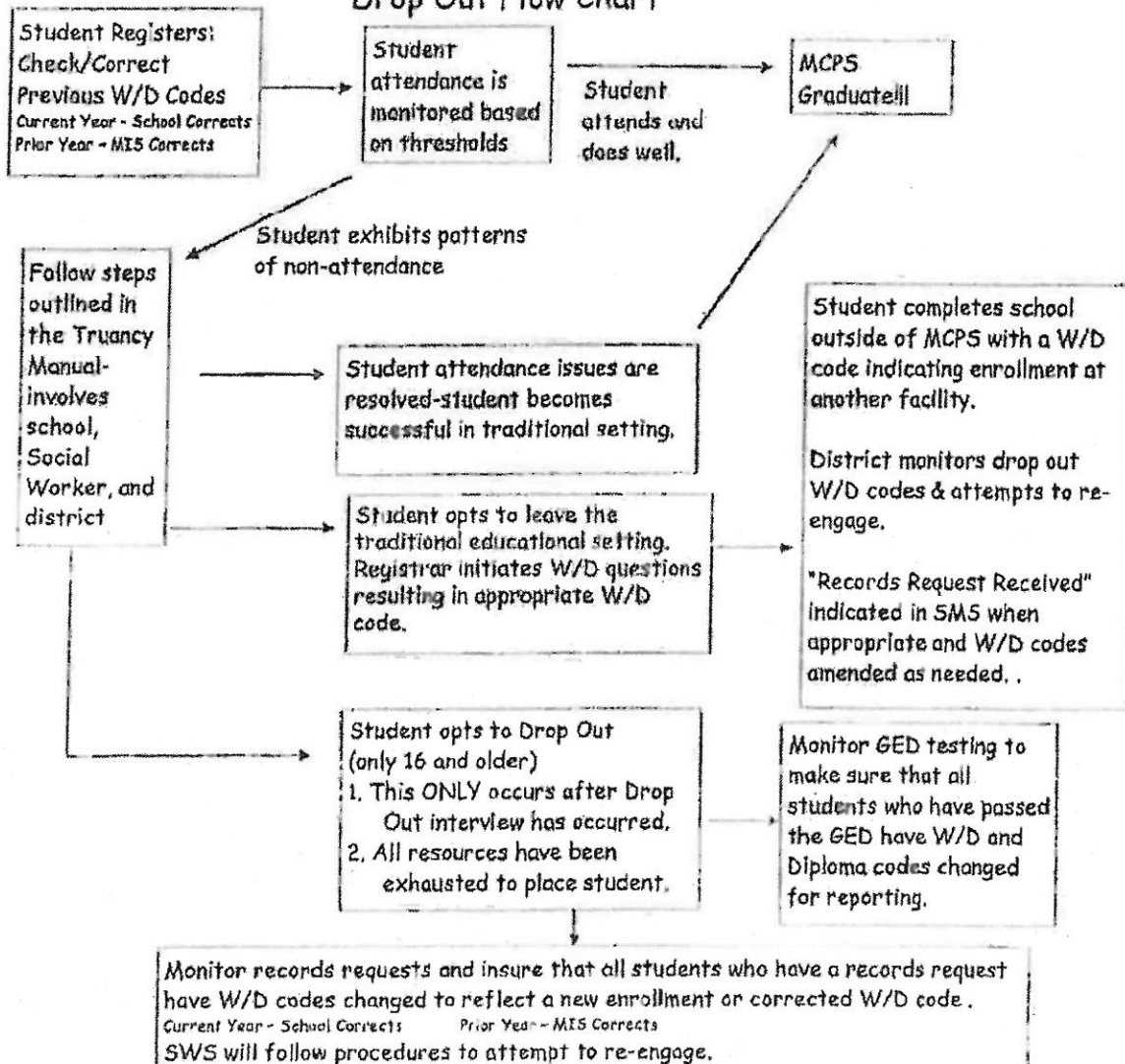
2. What is the highest level of education completed by your paternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

Drop Out Prevention Guideline

Purpose: This document will articulate all of the processes that should be followed by schools and district personnel to continue to improve the drop out/graduation rate for MCPS.

Drop Out Flow Chart



The District will continue to send out Monthly reports of current year students who have Drop Out codes in need of cleaning. District offices (Home Ed/SWS) will use monitoring tools to follow up with school withdrawals.

- I. Registrar/IPC Responsibilities
- II. Guidance Counselor Responsibilities
- III. Attendance Responsibilities
- IV. District Responsibilities

I. Registrar/IPC Responsibilities

Since the Registrar/IPC is the point of contact for all students entering and leaving a school, the role of this position is vital in maintaining the most accurate enrollment and withdrawal coding for the district.

A. When enrolling students, take a moment and look at the W/D codes that are in place for that student. If you see any of the following codes, take action to correct the code because you have the opportunity to determine where the student has been. *If the code is during the current school year, the school may make the change. If it is for the prior year, MIS must make the change in the amendment system.*

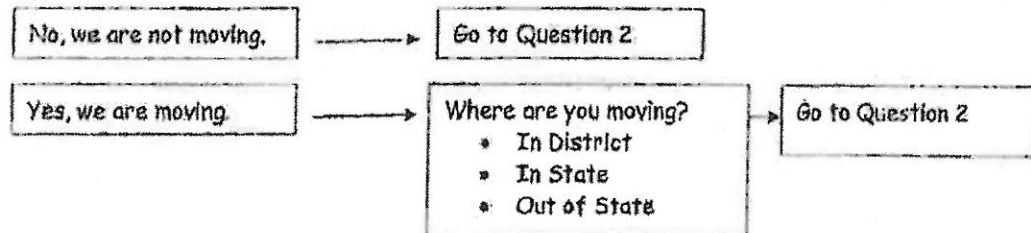
Code	Definition
DNE	Did Not Enter
W05	Any student age 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intent of returning
W13	Any K-12 student withdrawn from school due to court action
W15	Any K-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to nonattendance.
W18	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to medical reasons
W21	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to being expelled - Never coded by the school - by MIS ONLY
W22	Any K-12 student whose whereabouts is unknown.
W23	Any K-12 student who withdraws from school for any reason other than W01-W22 or W24-W27

<input type="radio"/>	08/07/2006	W02-Trans To Another School	NORTH MARION MIDDLE SCHOOL	Grade: 7	
<input type="radio"/>	07/19/2007	W02-Trans To Another School	NORTH MARION MIDDLE SCHOOL	Grade: 7	Not at
<input type="radio"/>	07/19/2007	W02-Trans To Another School	INFINITY SCHOOL/MARION COUNTY	Grade: 7	
<input type="radio"/>	05/24/2007	W02-Trans To Another School	INFINITY SCHOOL/MARION COUNTY	Grade: 7	Not at
<input type="radio"/>	08/19/2007	W01-Left For School Same Day	NORTH MARION MIDDLE SCHOOL	Grade: 8	
<input type="radio"/>	01/23/2008	W02-Trans To Another School	NORTH MARION MIDDLE SCHOOL		Not at
<input type="radio"/>	01/23/2008	W02-Trans To Another School	INFINITY SCHOOL/MARION COUNTY		
<input type="radio"/>	06/11/2008	W02-Trans To Another School	INFINITY SCHOOL/MARION COUNTY		Returned student processed by WPA
<input type="radio"/>	08/19/2008	W02-Trans To Another School	NORTH MARION HIGH SCHOOL		
<input type="radio"/>	11/19/2008	W15-Withdrawn from school	NORTH MARION HIGH SCHOOL		Not at
<input type="radio"/>	11/24/2008	W01-Left For School Same Day	NORTH MARION HIGH SCHOOL		
<input type="radio"/>	12/09/2008	W02-Trans To Another School	NORTH MARION HIGH SCHOOL		Not at

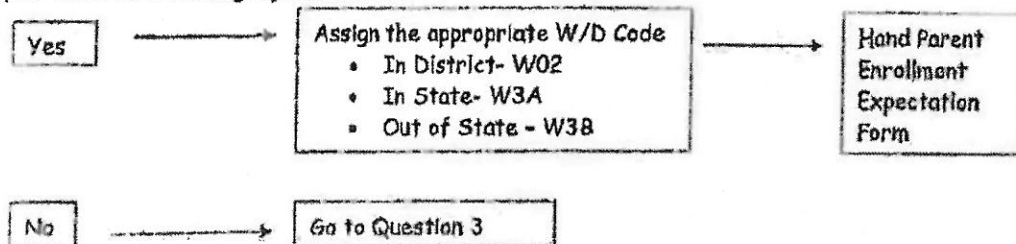
B. State Statute requires "Parental Notification" when determining the correct W/D code to use for students leaving a school. If a student comes in and states they are going to W/D, the student must conference with a Guidance Counselor or School Administrator.

If a parent or legal guardian calls or comes in to W/D the student, the following questions should be asked:

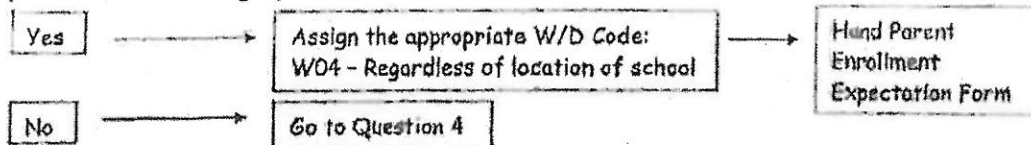
1. Are you moving?



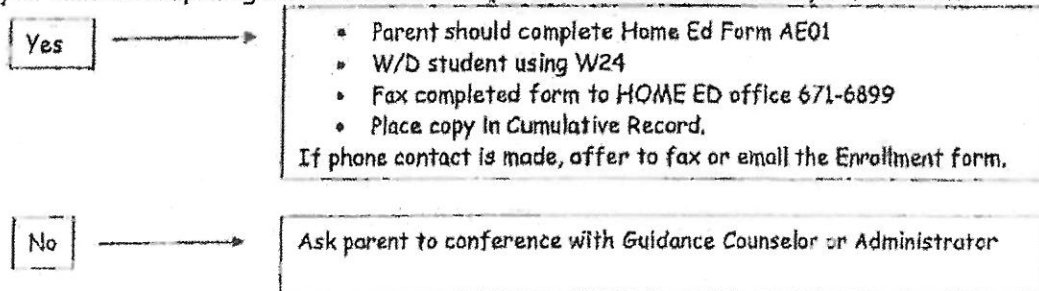
2. Will your child be attending a public school?



3. Will your child be attending a private school?



4. Will your child be completing work via the internet (Florida Virtual, Marion Virtual) or from Home?



C. When a Records Request is received, notation should be made in SMS.

- Search for/select the student (make sure under edit you have "Include W/D Students" selected).
- Go to MCPS Specific, and place and click in the "Records Request Received" in the appropriate box.
- Verify that the W/D code matches the data provided on the Records Request. If a change needs to be made in the current year, you should complete. If it is in a prior year, contact MIS.
- Proceed with records submission as required by the request received.

Chancery SMS - Student Search > Student Search Results

Actions: Edit > Reports > Help

Student Search:

SEARCH: Student, Family, First Year Students, CLASS, Homeless, Classes, SCHOOL, Awards, Student Behavior, School Info, Making Progress, ADULT, School Setup, Scheduling, Classing, etc.

Selected: ☐ Student Search, ☐ Withdrawn Students, ☐ Incoming Students, ☐ Other, ☐ Homeless

Gr(A)	ID	Gender	Birthdate
10	N/A	F	Aug 27, 1994
10	N/A	M	Feb 27, 1993
10	N/A	F	Sep 33, 1993
10	N/A	M	Nov 29, 1992

3 (1-33 of 48) | Next

Chancery SMS - Student Search > Student Search Results > MCPS Local Elements

Actions: Edit > Reports > Help

Admission, Patrick McKinley

Local Elements

Only check this box when Green Top label is required.

☐ Green Top Required

Select Deny Network Access if you do not want the student to have internet access.

☐ Deny Network Access

Withdrawal Data

☒ Records Request Received

☐ Enrolled in Home Ed

Apply | OK | Cancel

The following codes should not be used unless approved by a school based administrator:

Code	Definition
W05	Any student age 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intent of returning (Cannot be used unless Intent form is on file)
W13	Any K-12 student withdrawn from school due to court action (Not to be used for DJJ Placement)
W15	Any K-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to nonattendance (Cannot be used until all processes in Truancy Manual have been completed)
W18	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to medical reasons (Hospital Homebound should be first option for these students)
W21	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to being expelled (Never coded by the school, used by MIS only)
W22	Any K-12 student whose whereabouts is unknown (Should not be used until Social Work Services has exhausted all measures)
W23	Any K-12 student who withdraws from school for any reason other than W01-W22 or W24-W27 (Never coded by the school, used by MIS only)

II. Guidance Counselor Responsibilities

A. Student who exhibits a pattern of non-attendance:

Once these students have been identified then the GC should follow the steps that are outlined in the Truancy Manual.

B. Student who expresses an interest in dropping out:

a. Discuss options with student with heavy emphasis on Home Ed

Benefits of Home Ed Enrollment

- Allows student greatest flexibility to try other forms of education
- Maintains an enrollment with MCPS for ease of transition
- Student can participate in Extra-curriculars/Athletics if eligible
- No potential loss of funding for the parent (if applicable)
- Student maintains Driver's License

b. If the student's desire to drop out is imminent, must complete the Exit Interview Student Survey. (Can be found by searching "Exit" in the District Forms Repository).

When completed, data should be entered into SMS accordingly.

The screenshot shows the website for the Student Assignment and Records Department, located at 2100 R Road, Suite 100, Ocala, FL 34471. The page features a navigation menu on the left with links to Home, About Us, Services, Forms Search, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled "Forms Search" and includes a "Search Results" section. Below the search results, there is a "Form Search" section with a "Form Search" button and a "Form Search" input field. A red arrow points to the "Form Search" button.

III. Attendance Responsibilities

The attendance clerk at each school will be responsible for monitoring attendance, sending letters for non-attendance and providing data for CST meetings according to the Truancy Manual guidelines.

IV. School Administrator Responsibilities

1. Counseling students/parents when needed
2. Conduct Exit Interviews (16 or older), when needed
3. Monitor W/D practices at the school to insure integrity

V. District Responsibilities

The District will assist schools by providing the following:

1. Social Workers to perform various aspects of the Truancy Manual.
2. Continue to update SMS when students successfully pass the GED.
3. Provide data back to schools regarding Drop Out W/D codes of students who should be researched and cleaned on a monthly basis.
4. Assist with training of all parties
5. Home Ed will monitor W24 codes and insure that these students have registered by comparing SMS data to internal database, Home Ed will engage SWS as needed.
6. Home Ed will place/remove "Enrolled in Home Ed" indicator in SMS Local Elements as students required to assist in monitoring.
7. SWS will follow up on withdrawn students by performing frequent queries of W/D codes in SMS via specific reports.

Home Education Enrollment Process

For students enrolling in Home Education from MCPS, the following processes must be followed:

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian goes to the student's current school to notify the registrar/guidance representative they wish to withdraw their child to Home Education.

2. Base-School Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date, and return the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form.
- Confirm that all textbooks and library books have been returned, and that all debts have been paid.
- Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form with the school stamp.
- Return the completed original copy of the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form to the parent/guardian, keeping a copy for your files pending notification from Home Education office that the student has indeed enrolled in Home Education. (At this time, no data entry has been done and the student is not officially withdrawn.)
- Instruct the parent/guardian to report to the Home Education office within five (5) school days to turn in the completed original *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form. Social Work Services must be notified if this does not occur.

3. Home Education Paperwork:

- Once the parent/guardian turns in the original completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form to the Home Education office, confirm the form has been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the base-school representative.
- The parent/guardian and student meet with Home Education personnel to receive resource information/options and discuss requirements.
- Sign, date, and school stamp the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form, keeping the original, and providing one copy to the parent/guardian.
- Via email, notify the student's base-school to officially withdraw the student to Home Education and perform required data entry.

The student is now officially enrolled in Home Education.

Home Education Office
@ MTI, Bldg. 1
1614 E. Fort King Street
Ocala, FL 34471
352-238-0595 / ext. 50275

Home Education Termination Process

For students terminating Home Education and returning to MCPS, the following processes must be followed:

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian goes to the Home Education office to notify they wish to withdraw their child from Home Education.

2. Home Education Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date, and return the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form.
- The Virtual School counselor reviews academic records from virtual schools and/or the student's portfolio to determine grades/units/credits earned.
 - I. Record this information on the *MCPS Home Education Grade Report for Incoming Students* form and attach documentation.
 - II. Have the parent/guardian sign and date completed Grade Report form.
 - III. Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and Grade Report forms with the school stamp.
 - IV. If there are significant gaps in the academic records, or if the student failed to complete course work, notify the APC at the student's base-school via e-mail.¹
 - V. Return the completed original copies of the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and Grade Report forms to the parent/guardian, keeping a copy for your files pending notification from the student's base-school that the student has indeed enrolled. (At this time, no data entry has been done and the student is not officially terminated from Home Education.)
- Instruct the parent/guardian to report to the student's base-school within five (5) school days to turn in the completed original *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and Grade Report forms. Social Work Services must be notified if this does not occur.

3. Base-School Paperwork:

- Once the parent/guardian turns in the original completed *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and Grade Report forms to the counselor at the student's base-school, confirm the forms have been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the Home Education office.
- Academically place the student based on information provided on the MCPS Home Education Grade Report form and any other information relayed by the Home Education/Virtual School counselor.
- Sign, date, and school stamp the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and Grade Report forms, keeping the originals, and providing one copy to the parent/guardian.
- Via email, notify the Home Education office to officially withdraw the student to their base school and perform required data entry.

¹ In cases where there are significant questions about the work completed by the student while in Home Education, the Executive Director of K-12 Academic Services should be consulted.

14/15 W24 Withdrawn to Home Education Code

The final 14/15 W24 list of seniors was reviewed by Paul Vowinkel the Home Education liaison. The list of 188 students was provided to Mr. Vowinkel by the MIS department. The list was cross referenced with the Home Education data base to see which students were active or inactive within the data base. After concluding that several seniors were neither active nor inactive but had a W24 code the team began searching individual cumulative folders for each student not located in the Home Education data base. Each of the folders was reviewed to see if there was any documentation that would support the W24 code given to the student by the base school. If documentation was found to be in the student cumulative folder that supported the code a copy was made and the spreadsheet was updated with a description of the documentation. The documentation was copied and given to the Home Education clerk to enter into the Home Education data base.

The final spreadsheet of 188 students will show under column K the type of information that was located in the cumulative folder that supports the W24 code or does not support the W24 code. 96 of the original 188 students were found to have justification for the use of W24. 92 did not.

15/16 W24 Withdrawn to Home Education Code

Based on the findings from 14/15 the procedure for the use of W24 at the base school has been updated to ensure the proper documentation is forwarded to the Home Education office.

Updated and current steps for Home Education Enrollment

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian goes to the student's current school to notify the registrar/guidance representative they wish to withdraw their child to Home Education.

2. Base-School Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date, and return the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form.
- Confirm that all textbooks and library books have been returned, and that all debts have been paid.
- Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form with the school stamp.
- Return a copy of the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form to the parent/guardian. Scan the signed copy of the form to the home education office; keeping a copy for your files pending notification from Home Education Contact that the student has indeed enrolled in Home Education. Courier original copy of the *Notice of Intent* to the Home Education Office. (At this time, no data entry has been done and the student is not officially withdrawn.)

- Instruct the parent/guardian to report to the Home Education office within five (5) school days to turn in the completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form. Social Work Services must be notified if this does not occur.

3. Home Education Paperwork:

- Once the parent/guardian turns in the completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form to the Home Education office, confirm the form has been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the base-school representative.
- The parent/guardian and student meet with Home Education personnel to receive resource information/options and discuss requirements.
- Sign, date, and school stamp the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form, keeping the original, and providing one copy to the parent/guardian.
- Via email, notify the student's base-school to officially withdraw the student to Home Education and perform required data entry.

The student is now officially enrolled in Home Education.

Timeline

June 1	Met with district leadership about concern from board member.
June 2	Meeting with board member.
June 20	Staff meeting about Drop out procedures. Update W24 procedures.
July 12	Staff meeting about Drop out procedures. Update W24 procedures.
July 21	All school administrators updated on new process.
August 17	Training for Attendance Contact responsible for new process at school.
August 31	Training for School Counselors on new process.
September 8	Conference call with all IPC's to inform of new process.

Procedures will continue to be emphasized with all stake holders with a process review scheduled for June 6, 2017.

**Florida Department of Education
Exit Interview Student Survey**

School Name _____ School District _____
Student Name _____ Student DOB _____
Grade Level _____ Date _____

Directions: Please circle the response that best describes your experience or provide a description of your experience in the space provided.

1. Which of the following best describes your **primary** reason for terminating school enrollment?

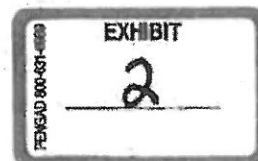
- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

2. Which of the following best describes your **secondary** reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

3. What would have improved your chances of staying in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning)
- B. Better teachers
- C. Smaller classes
- D. More individualized instruction
- E. Better communication with your teachers
- F. Better communication with your parents
- G. Increased parental involvement
- H. Less freedom and more supervision from parents
- I. Less freedom and more supervision from school officials
- J. Other



4. What actions did your school personnel take to keep you enrolled in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Provided student counseling | I. Discussed and offered participation in a credit recovery course/program |
| B. Scheduled a conference with parent(s), guardian(s), student, and school staff | J. Discussed and offered access to Dropout Prevention Program(s) (e.g., alternative education, disciplinary, teenage parent) |
| C. Discussed and offered options for tutoring | K. Tracked student progress (by teacher, counselor, social worker, graduation coach, etc.) |
| D. Discussed the consequences of dropping out | L. Changed or revised course schedule |
| E. Discussed and offered options for continuing education in a different environment (e.g., Adult Education, home school, virtual school, hospital homebound) | M. Implemented intervention contracts (e.g. attendance or behavior) |
| F. Discussed and offered alternative options for graduation (e.g., diploma options, GED Exit Option or GED Testing) | N. Student reported that school staff took no action |
| G. Conducted home visits | O. Other |
| H. Referred student to agencies/programs to address problems interfering with school success (e.g., substance abuse counseling, psychological counseling, family counselor) | |

Please check and sign below to certify that each of the following statements was addressed by school personnel.

I am at least 16 years of age and it is my intent to terminate my school enrollment. I received counseling from a guidance counselor or other school personnel which addressed the following:

- ☐ Terminating school enrollment prior to graduation will likely reduce my potential earnings and negatively affect my career options.
- ☐ Termination of school enrollment will result in the revocation/denial of my driving privileges until age 18
- ☐ My reasons for leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Possible actions that could keep me from leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Options for continuing my education in a different environment, e.g., Adult Education or GED testing.
- ☐ For Bright Futures eligibility, GED students must complete credit requirements before taking GED exam.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
(if student is under 18 years of age)

School Personnel Signature: _____ Date: _____

Optional:

1. What is the highest level of education completed by your maternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

2. What is the highest level of education completed by your paternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Definition and Responsibilities

1. What is home education?

Section 1002.01, F.S., defines home education as the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent or guardian, in order to satisfy the requirement for compulsory education as defined in Section 1002.20, F.S. Current law does not prescribe a curriculum or course of study for home education programs.

2. Who can teach in a home education setting?

Any parent who complies with the reporting, record keeping, and student evaluation requirements specified in statutory law may conduct a home education program. The parent is not required to be a certified teacher.

3. What are the responsibilities of parents who establish a home education program?

As required by Section 1002.41, F.S., to establish a home education program and maintain compliance with the statute, a parent must:

- a. Send a written notice of intent to the school district superintendent.
- b. Maintain a portfolio of records, consisting of a log of educational activities, writings, worksheets, and creative materials used or developed by the student
- c. Make the portfolio available for inspection by the superintendent upon a 15-day notice. (The legislation does not require the superintendent to inspect all portfolios.)
- d. Provide an annual educational evaluation for the student's educational process to the school district superintendent.
- e. Preserve each student's portfolio for two years.
- f. Submit a letter of termination upon completion of the home education program or change of residence.

4. How long has home education been a means of meeting the regular attendance requirement in Florida?

The law creating Florida's home education program became effective June 17, 1985.

5. What is the distinction between a home education program and an umbrella/satellite school?

A home education program refers to a parent who has registered with the local school district home education office and has agreed to comply with the home education requirements as listed in Florida Statutes. An umbrella/satellite school refers to a private school offering programs or services to homeschool families.

6. Must a district's packet of information regarding home education include a form letter for the registration and termination of home education program?

No. School districts are not required to provide forms, although some districts do so to facilitate processing of information.

7. Does the school district have the authority to exceed the Florida Statutes with local policies?



The school district must abide by the home education guidelines as listed in Florida Statutes. A district may not enact policies that would apply additional guidelines to home education programs or that would make it more difficult for students to participate in home education.

- 8. If a home education parent employs a tutor to instruct his or her student, who is responsible for the records?**

If the parent is participating in a home education program, as defined in the law, the parent is responsible for all records.

- 9. What happens to the records of a student who is withdrawn and entered into home education?**

Cumulative records of a home education student are retained by the school district, pursuant to local board policies.

- 10. How do districts report transcripts to the Department of Education for home education students who take courses at a public school?**

Districts may report this information using the number 0998. This will place home education transcripts in a separate and unique category, identifiable from all other students.

- 11. Do parents have access to any state-appropriated funds for home education?**

The only state funds that may be used by home education families are available through the Gardiner Scholarship Program for students with disabilities. Information on this program is available at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/gardiner/>

- 12. Are home education students eligible for Bright Futures Scholarships?**

Yes. Home education students may qualify for a scholarship through the Bright Futures Scholarship Program if they are registered with their districts as home education students during the 11th and 12th grades. The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program provides a Home Education Program Packet, which conveys eligibility criteria specific to home education students, including required college admission test scores, community service documentation, district registration confirmation, and dates for financial aid application deadlines. The Home Education Program packet is available from <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/ssfad/bf/homepac.htm> or by telephone, toll-free at 1-888-827-2004.

- 13. How may a parent contact other parents who have chosen home education for their children?**

There are home education support groups in every district. In addition to district support groups, there are also statewide groups to support home educators. Florida Parent Educators Association (FPEA), a statewide support group, may be contacted toll-free at (877) 275-3732 or online at <http://www.fpea.org>. LIFE of Florida, an inclusive state support and networking group for home learners, may be accessed at <http://www.learningis4everyone.org>

- 14. May a parent implement a home education program for a 5-year old, even though regular attendance begins at age 6?**

Districts are not required to accept a letter of intent for a 5-year old; however, some districts have chosen to accept these letters. In that case, the home education parent should maintain a portfolio, and the student will be evaluated in the same manner as a student who is subject to regular attendance.

Instruction

- 15. How can a parent provide "sequentially progressive instruction?"**

There are many methods a parent may use to direct a home education program. As reflected in Florida Statute, a parent may:

- a. Instruct the student;
- b. Enroll the student in courses part-time in a public or private school;
- c. Enroll the student online in the Florida Virtual School;
- d. Enroll the student in correspondence courses;
- e. Hire a tutor, or
- f. Choose any other means that provides "sequentially progressive instruction" directed by the parent.

16. Are parents required to have a Florida teaching certificate to home educate?

No. A parent is not required to have a valid Florida teaching certificate to home educate a student. Furthermore, the instruction is no longer required to take place in the home nor must the parent be the person to deliver instruction.

17. Are home education students bound by the required school hours that apply to public school students?

No. There are no specific hourly attendance requirements for students in a home education program.

18. Do home education students have the same opportunity as public and nonpublic school students to enter a college of their choice?

Yes, depending on the student's qualifications and the admission requirements of the postsecondary institution. In order to understand the specific admission requirements of a postsecondary institution, home educators should directly contact the admissions office of the institution in which they have an interest.

19. Do school districts provide instructional materials to home education students?

There is no requirement for districts to provide instructional materials to home education students.

20. May home education students enroll at specialized or magnet schools?

Yes. Most districts have established a selection process for any student wishing to attend a magnet school. A home education student would adhere to the same process as a public school student.

21. May home education parents dually enroll a home education student at a postsecondary institution?

Yes. Home education students may enroll directly with the postsecondary institution pursuant to Section 1007.271(10)(a), F.S., or use the district's interinstitutional articulation agreement. Contact the district home education contact for specific information about the local interinstitutional articulation agreement. If the home education student enrolls through the district's interinstitutional articulation agreement as the basis for dual enrollment, the student is effectively enrolled in the district for the course(s) and the district may earn FTE and must provide instructional materials.

A home education student not using the district's interinstitutional articulation agreement must provide proof of enrollment in the home education program and be responsible for instructional materials.

22. May home education students participate in local district course offerings?

Although there is no requirement to do so, some districts provide opportunities for home education students to enroll in specified courses in district schools. Districts may report FTE funding for home education students enrolled in district courses.

23. What type of diploma do home education students receive?

There is no diploma issued by the public school system in Florida for the completion of a home education program. While not required, some students elect to culminate their home education program by taking the General Educational Development (GED) test. The toll free number for information pertaining to the GED is 1-800-237-5113.

24. Do students who have been home educated have the option to return to public school?

Yes. Any student who is within the compulsory attendance age has the right to enroll in a public school. Current district policies and Florida State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.09941, govern the grade placement of home education students.

25. How does a home education student at the high school level transfer into a public school when the previous course work is not awarded in the traditional manner?

State Board Rule 6A-1.09941 establishes a uniform transfer of credit at the high school level as follows: If the student does not possess an official transcript or is a home education student, credits shall be validated through performance during the first grading period.

26. May a home education student attend summer school?

Home education students may be allowed to attend summer school, if the district offers summer school.

Evaluation

27. What does the annual educational evaluation include?

A student in a home education setting must be evaluated once a year to demonstrate educational progress at a level equivalent to his or her abilities. The parent/guardian selects the method of evaluation from those provided in Florida Statute, then files a copy of the evaluation annually in the superintendent's office. The evaluation must consist of one of the following:

- a. A Florida certified teacher chosen by the parent/guardian may evaluate the child's progress based on the review of the portfolio and discussion with the student;
- b. The student may take any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;
- c. The student may take a state student assessment test used by the school district and administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;
- d. The student may be evaluated by a psychologist holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of Section 490.003 (7) or (8), F.S.; or
- e. The student may be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent/guardian.

28. What requirements must be met by a teacher conducting an annual evaluation of a home education student?

As defined in Section 1002.41, F.S., a teacher who evaluates a home education student must hold current certification in academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level in the state of Florida. Of the five evaluation options described in the law, three involve a certified teacher.

29. How does a parent locate an evaluator for the annual evaluation?

Parents may contact the local district home education office or a local parent group to obtain the names of available evaluators.

30. Does the home education student have the right to take standardized tests at the local school district?

School districts are required to provide state assessment tests, if the parent chooses this option as a form of evaluation. School districts may offer standardized tests to home education students.

31. May a district set a deadline for the annual evaluation?

"Annually" is defined in Florida Statute as one year from the date of the letter of intent. However some home educators may choose to follow the requested deadline in order to follow the traditional school calendar.

32. What is the appropriate recourse when a district does not receive an annual evaluation on a home education student?

Section 1002.41, F.S., requires the parent to provide for an annual evaluation of the home education student. Failure to do so places the home education program in non-compliance and permits the superintendent, after notice to the parent, to terminate the program. Non-compliance with this requirement should trigger the district's policy regarding non-compliance with compulsory school attendance.

33. What is the definition of a portfolio?

Section 1002.41, F.S., defines a portfolio as "A log of educational activities which is made contemporaneously with the instruction and which designates by title any reading materials used and samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student."

34. How long must the portfolio be preserved?

The portfolio shall be preserved by the parent/guardian for two years and shall be made available for inspection by the superintendent, or the superintendent's agent, upon a 15-day written notice. The superintendent, or the superintendent's agent, is not required to inspect all portfolios.

35. May a school district require that a home education student take the FCAT in order to return to public school?

No

36. May a home education student use more than one of the methods listed in Section 1002.41, F.S., to satisfy the annual evaluation component?

No. While a parent may utilize several methods to assess student progress in the regular course of providing a home education program, for the purposes of Section 1002.41, F.S., only one method may be selected and submitted to the school district.

37. May a home education student take the FCAT for reasons other than fulfilling the evaluation requirement of Section 1002.41, F.S.?

The only statutory authority which permits home education students to take the FCAT is the provision that permits parents to elect FCAT as the official annual evaluation.

Nonattendance-Truancy

38. Can the parent of a student who has been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance enroll that student in a home education program?

Yes. However, at the time that a student who has been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance is enrolled in a home education program, the home education contact will:

- a. Provide the parent or guardian with a copy of the home education law, Section 1002.41, F.S., and the accountability requirements of the truancy law, Section 1003.26, F.S.; and

- b. Refer the parent or guardian to a home education review committee composed of members as specified in Section 1003.26, F.S.

39. How will the home education contact know which students have been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance?

When a school's student study team determines that a student has been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance, the law requires that the principal of the school notify the superintendent of schools and the district home education contact. The home education contact is expected to maintain this information to verify whether a student who is being enrolled in a home education program has been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance.

40. What are the accountability requirements for home education, once a student has been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance?

The parent must submit a portfolio, as defined by Section 1002.41, F.S., to be reviewed by a home education review committee every 30 days until the committee determines that the home education program is in compliance with Section 1003.26, F.S. The first portfolio review must occur within the first 30 calendar days of the establishment of the home education program.

41. Who serves on the home education review committee?

According to Section 1003.26, F.S., the home education review committee is to be composed of the school district contact for home education and at least two home educators selected by the parent from a list of eligible home education parents maintained by the district. Eligible home education parents are those who have conducted a home education program for at least three years and who have indicated a willingness to serve on a home education review committee.

42. How does the school district home education contact develop a list of eligible home educators?

The home education contact may wish to send a letter to all parents who have conducted a home education program for at least three years, inviting them to submit their names as possible candidates for a home education review committee. The list will be made up of those parents who indicate a willingness to serve on such a committee.

43. What will happen if the home education review committee determines that the home education program is in compliance with the statute?

Once the committee determines that the home education program is in compliance, the parent will no longer be required to submit a portfolio to the home education review committee. The parent will be required to comply with the requirements of a home education program pursuant to Section 1002.41, F.S., as is any parent involved in a home education program.

44. What will happen if the parent of a student who has been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance, and who has been enrolled in home education, fails to provide a portfolio for review by the committee?

The committee shall notify the superintendent of schools who shall then terminate the home education program and require the parent to enroll the student in an attendance option provided under Section 1002.41, F.S., within three days. Failure of a parent or guardian to enroll a student in an attendance option after termination of a home education program shall constitute non-compliance with the compulsory attendance requirement and may result in criminal prosecution of the parent under Section 1003.27(2), F.S.

45. How long should the home education contact keep a student's name on the list of students who have been found to exhibit a pattern of nonattendance?

If a student was placed on the list more than 90 days prior to the parent enrolling the student in a home education program, the home education contact should check with the school to determine if the student is still considered to be at-risk for nonattendance

46. How can I get more information about truancy and driver's licenses for home education students?

You may contact the Florida Department of Motor Vehicles at (850) 922-9000.

47. May a home education student be automatically dropped at the age of 16?

No. The family must notify the school district if the student wishes to terminate the home education program. Section 1003.21, F.S. requires that students terminating enrollment at age 16 must be notified that their earning power is likely to be reduced. It is in the best interest of the student for the district to maintain home education records until the completion of high school.

48. Which member of district personnel is responsible for processing waivers for employment of home education students?

School districts are not required to process waivers for employment of home education students except to confirm, with a release for information from the parent, that the student is enrolled in home education.

Interscholastic Extracurricular Activities.

49. How is the term "extracurricular activity" defined by the law?

An "extracurricular activity" is defined as "any school-authorized or education-related activity occurring during or outside the regular instructional day, Section 1006.15, F.S." This definition was added to the Act to make it clear that any activity outside of classroom activities and instruction should be considered extracurricular.

For example, some school districts had excluded home education students from musical clubs and ensembles by stating that the performance groups were part of curricular instruction and outside of the realm of extracurricular activities. The 1997 amendment clarifies that a district may not define "extracurricular" in such narrow way. District policies that apply a more narrow interpretation of "extracurricular," and exclude students on this basis, are contrary to the law and legislative intent. Activities outside of classroom instruction are generally defined as extracurricular and open to home education students.

50. May home education students participate in "interscholastic extracurricular activities" offered at public schools?

Yes. To participate in "inter-scholastic extracurricular activities", Section 1006.15 F.S., requires that home education students be given the same opportunity as public school students. The law prohibits any requirements that would make participation less accessible for home education students and creates a broad definition of "interscholastic extracurricular activities" that covers any activity occurring during or outside the regular school day. However, the law does allow for home education students to develop an agreement to participate in "interscholastic extracurricular activities" at a non-public school.

51. Is there a difference between an "extracurricular activity" and an "interscholastic-extracurricular activity?"

No. The terms are used interchangeably.

52. What grade levels are allowed to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities?

Section 1006.15, F.S., primarily addresses students in grades 9-12 but does not prohibit students in lower grades from participation. The by-laws of the governing organization regulate which students, and under what circumstances those students, may participate in the interscholastic extracurricular activity.

For example, Section 1006.20, F.S., designated the Florida High School Activities Association as the governing organization for athletics. For the purpose of athletics, the Association defines "high school" as grades 6-12. If athletics are offered in a grade 6-8 school that is governed by this Association, the athletic program must be made available upon request to home education students at that grade level. Section 1006.15, F.S., states that public schools may not belong to any governing organization that discriminates against an eligible home education student.

53. What if the extracurricular activity requires a class to be taken in order to participate?

If a class is required in order to take part in the extracurricular activity, such as band class during the day in order to take part in the school's marching band, the district must afford the home education student the opportunity to enroll for that class, pursuant to Section 1006.15(5), F.S.

54. Do districts receive any funding when home education students participate in extra-curricular activities?

No, unless the home education student enrolls in a class required to participate in the extracurricular activity. The district may report that student for FTE purposes. Additionally, home education students may be required to pay any of the fees or costs that are required of all participating students.

55. May a district develop policies that restrict the access of home education students to extracurricular activities?

No. Districts may establish policies for participation that apply to all students, such as evidence of required immunizations, medical clearance for sports activities, auditions and class participation. However, the district may not enact policies that would apply different standards to home education students or make it more difficult for them to participate.

56. Must home education students who participate in extracurricular activities offered at public schools comply with school entry immunization requirements?

Yes. If the home education student is participating in extracurricular activities under Section 1006.15, F.S., the student must meet the same immunization requirements as students attending any non-home education program.

57. How are grade point average requirements applied to extracurricular activities?

In order to participate in extracurricular activities, a home education student must have the required 2.0 or better grade point average in academic courses. This applies to both public and home education students. The law allows for a method of evaluation of the student's progress to be agreed upon by the parent and the principal. The evaluation may be based on a teacher's review of the student's work, grades earned through correspondence or at a postsecondary school, standardized test scores, or other method as allowed by Section 1002.41, F.S.

58. How does the district determine at which school the home education student may participate in extracurricular activities?

The home education student must meet the same residency requirements as other students to participate in extracurricular activities.

Exceptional Student Education

59. If a home education parent suspects that their child has a disability, is the school district required to evaluate the child?

Yes. The school district is obligated to "identify, locate, and evaluate" all children with disabilities, including those attending private schools and home education programs, in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This evaluation must be at no cost to the parent.

60. In this circumstance, how would a home education parent access evaluation services?

The parent should contact the exceptional student education administrator in the school district in which they reside.

61. What would be required of the home education parent?

The school district would require that the parent sign a written consent for the evaluation. The district is also required to review existing information on the child before conducting an evaluation. The parent may be asked to provide information from the child's portfolio and may also be asked to complete checklists and/or informal observations.

62. After the evaluation is conducted, what will occur?

The parents will be invited to attend a meeting in which school district staff will review the outcome of their child's evaluation. Following that review, a determination will be made regarding whether or not the child is considered an eligible child with a disability as defined by Florida State Board of Education Rules.

63. What is the school district's obligation, if the child is eligible?

If the home education parent chooses to enroll the child in public school, the school district must ensure that a free and appropriate education is made available to the child.

64. What if the parent does not elect this option?

The district will typically propose to provide some level of service to the child through the use of a **services plan**. For instance, if it is determined that the child needs speech/language therapy services, the school district could allow the child to come to a public school near the child's home for these services during the week.

Dual Enrollment

65. Does a home education student have to receive permission from the school district to participate in dual enrollment on the community college campus?

No. College and state universities often request proof of registration from the home education student. That information can be obtained from the local school district home education coordinator.

66. What is the school district required to do for home education students who have an articulation agreement with the community college or a state university?

The school district must provide the community college or state university with proof that a student is enrolled in a home education program pursuant to s. 1002.41 F.S.

67. May home education students take dual enrollment courses at district high schools?

Yes. Districts that have a part-time enrollment policy may enroll home education students in the school district and receive FTE for the student. This is a local decision that is articulated in the district pupil progression plan.

68. Does a community college have to provide instructional materials /textbooks for home education students?

No. The law specifically states that a community college is not prohibited from providing dual enrollment materials/books to home education students if the college is providing materials/books to other public or private students in dual enrollment pursuant to s. 1007.271(14)F.S.

69. Is the school district responsible for the transportation of a home education student to a dual enrollment course?

No.

70. Is a home education student limited to the same course options as a public school student?

Home school students are limited to the DE courses and programs offered by institutions for that term.

71. Should community colleges report course grades to the student's school district?

No. The school district has no record-keeping responsibility for home educated students.

72. Is there a minimum age or grade level required of a home education student for participation in dual enrollment?

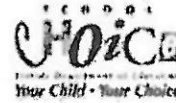
The minimum age and the maximum years allowed for dual enrollment are outlined in the local articulation agreement.

73. Is there a minimum GPA for home education students to participate in dual enrollment?

No.



School District of Manatee County
Office of Student Assignment
LETTER OF INTENT TO HOME EDUCATE



The School District of Manatee County provides this form.
Data marked with an asterisk (*) is required, all other data is optional. You may choose to either use this form
or provide your information by following the requirements as indicated by Florida Statute 1002.41

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION LEGIBLY

*Student's Last Name	*First	*Middle	Grade
*Residence Address	*City/State		*Zip Code
*Mailing Address if different	*City/State		*Zip Code
Parent/Guardian Phone(s) Cell and Landlines		Email Address	
*Student's Date of Birth	Gender	Social Security Number <small>(Do not print SSN #)</small>	
Student's Birthplace City	State	Country	

Last School Attended: _____

Ethnicity: Is student of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin? Yes ☐ No ☐

Race:

☐ White ☐ Black/African American ☐ Asian ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Choose Type of Home Education Program

- ☐ I am opening a home education program for the first time in Manatee County.
☐ I am re-opening a home education program, which previously existed in Manatee County.
☐ I am adding a child(ren) to my existing home education program.
☐ I am enrolling in Home School with the School District of Manatee County to obtain a GED.

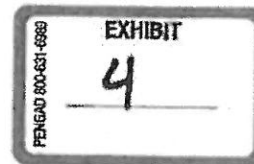
*Effective Start Date _____

*Parent/Guardian Name (PRINT) _____

*Parent/Guardian Signature _____

*Date of Signature _____

RETURN TO :
Office of Student Assignment
1400 1st Ave E Palmetto, FL 34221
Phone: (941) 708-4971 Fax: (941) 708-4976
Email: StudentAssignment@ManateeSchools.Net



For Office Use Only

Emailed Registrar _____

Entered in FOCUS _____

Sent Letter _____

Rev: 10/19/2017 sac

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MANATEE COUNTY
HOME EDUCATION PROGRAM

Board Workshop
April 12, 2016

Presented by
Danny Lundeen
Supervisor of Student Demographics,
Projections and Assignment



Home Education FAST FACTS

- Section 1002.01, Florida Statute (F.S.), defines home education as the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent or guardian, in order to satisfy the requirement for compulsory education as defined in Section 1002.20, F.S. Current law does not prescribe a curriculum or course of study for Home Education Programs.
- 1,400 Manatee County students are enrolled in Home Education (Home-Ed) Programs.
- District Policy 4.11 Home Education provides local procedures.

Parent Responsibilities

1. SUBMITTING YOUR NOTICE OF INTENT.
2. MAINTAINING YOUR PORTFOLIO.
3. MAKING YOUR PORTFOLIO AVAILABLE.
4. SUBMITTING AN ANNUAL EVALUATION.
5. PRESERVING YOUR RECORDS.
6. SUBMITTING YOUR NOTICE OF TERMINATION

District Responsibilities

1. Receive letter of intent from parent.
2. Inform current school of enrollment via email/
phone call of receipt of letter of intent so they
can go ahead and withdraw the student (W24)
for coding under Home-Ed cost center.
3. Produce letter of verification of enrollment into
Home-Ed with Manatee County School District
and provide to parent via email/postal mail.

District Responsibilities

4. Review new Home-Ed student's attendance, discipline, and credits/grades to identify students with a history of non-attendance, excessive discipline issues, and low academic performance. Those identified after 30 days under Home-Ed status are mailed a notice scheduling a portfolio review within 2 weeks (this allows us to aid parents that are struggling to get a home education program started and we are able to eliminate the belief that once under Home-Ed there is no accountability.)
5. If the home education student does not call or show for the scheduled portfolio review:
 - 16+ years old - Notice of withdrawal due to non-compliance is issued with enclosure of GED programs and Declaration of Intent to Terminate School Enrollment Form.
 - <16 years old - 3-Day letter and email to (Dropout Prevention / Truancy Department) for follow-up.

District Responsibilities

6. Annual reminder to all Home-Ed parents to provide yearly evaluation to Office Student Assignment (OSA) with enclosure of State Assessment Schedule and Evaluation Cover Sheet.
7. Upon receipt of annual evaluation OSA issues a response letter:
 - If student submits an acceptable evaluation.
 - If student does not submit an acceptable evaluation.
8. Once parent decides to end Home-Ed status because they have graduated their program, wish to enroll back in public or private school, or have moved out of Manatee County the parent issues OSA a letter of termination.
9. OSA withdraws the student and close the student's file.

Additional Information

- The FPEA (Florida Parents Educators Association) serves thousands of homeschooling families in Florida, delivering a wealth of support, guidance and information to both new and longtime home educators
- Annual report to Department Of Education (DOE) consists of # of students, # of families
- More recently used as tool to enter Florida Virtual School (FLVS)
- Many Home-Ed students dual enrolled – policy 4.11

From: Alicia Carrillo
To: lundeend@maricopaschools.net
Subject: FW: File transfer sites
Date: Thursday, November 03, 2016 12:58:00 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)

On 10/21/2016 at approximately 11 AM I received a phone call from Jeremy Billington from the Office of the Inspector General for the FLDOE (850.245.9738). The call consisted of his introducing himself and referring to the letter sent to Karen Carpenter the week before regarding an audit of 144 homeschool students pulled from survey 4. He double checked I was the appropriate contact for such an audit and then he asked me to determine which secure server linking FLDOE and MCSO would be available for me to receive his student list.

On 10/24/2016 I consulted with Dave Lesnek and was given two links to provide to Mr. Billington. I emailed the links that afternoon. I received no reply from Mr. Billington so I called and left him several voicemails throughout that week (apparently he was out of the office for much of the week). He emailed asking me to call him on 10/28/2016 (see below).


On 10/28/2016 via phone Mr. Billington explained he was able to get a secured link provided by his IT team that I could login into to get the list from. We remained connected until I opened the file and confirmed receipt. He listed the items he needed for each student were: Parent contact information, letter of intent, & Annual evaluations. Mr. Billington inquired how long I thought the process of collecting the items for each student would be. I replied that a week or so should be ample time, so he said he would expect the files within two weeks from 10/28/2016 but to let him know if we needed more time.

On 10/28/2016 I began to search for files and discovered the list was not for students enrolled in Home school, the list is of students withdrawn to homeschool.

On 10/31/2016 I called Danny to inform him that the bulk of the students listed never enrolled in Home School per our records.

Kind regards,



Alicia Carrillo,  School Choice Specialist | Office of Student Assignment (OSA)

Office: 602.706.4971 x.201 | Fax: 602.706.4994 | Email: acarrillo@flsdoe.org

Web site: MaricopaSchools.net

"Florida has a very broad Public Records Law. Virtually all written communications to or from School District Personnel are public records available to the public and media upon request. E-mail sent or received on the School District system"



will be considered public and will only be withheld from disclosure if deemed confidential pursuant to State Law."

From: Billington, Jeremy [mailto:Jeremy.Billington@fldoe.org]
Sent: Friday, October 28, 2016 1:16 PM
To: Alicia Carrillo <carrilloa@manateeschools.net>
Subject: RE: File transfer sites

Please give me a call when you have a moment. Thank you.

Jeremy Billington
Investigator

Florida Department of Education
Office of Inspector General
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1201
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
(850) 245-9738 F: (850) 245-9419
Jeremy.Billington@fldoe.org
cid:31645680-BD2B-4D4F-82FF-514C762BE818



From: Alicia Carrillo [mailto:carrilloa@manateeschools.net]
Sent: Monday, October 24, 2016 1:10 PM
To: Billington, Jeremy <Jeremy.Billington@fldoe.org>
Subject: FW: File transfer sites

Jeremy,

Below are the two links to secure servers

Kind regards,



Alicia Carrillo, SA | School Choice Specialist | Office of Student Assignment (OSA)

Office: 941.702.4071 x2011 | Fax: 941.703.4975 | 1450 1st Ave E | Tallahassee, FL

34221

Visit our website: ManateeSchools.Net

"Florida has a very broad Public Records Law. Virtually all written communications to or from School District Personnel are public records available to the public and media upon request. E-mail sent or received on the School District system will be considered public and will only be withheld from disclosure if deemed confidential pursuant to State Law."

From: David Lesnek
Sent: Monday, October 24, 2016 9:02 AM
To: Alicia Carrillo <carrilloa@manateeschools.net>
Subject: File transfer sites

Auditor General site:
<https://fip.aud.state.fl.us>

Tibco file transfer:

<https://xfiles.fldoe.org>

Dave

Dave Lesnek | Systems Analyst | IT Department | School District of Manatee County | (941) 708-8770 x2128 |
lesnek@cmanateeschools.net

"Florida has a very broad Public Records Law. Virtually all written communications to or from School District Personnel are public records available to the public and media upon request. E-mail sent or received on the School District system will be considered public and will only be withheld from disclosure if deemed confidential pursuant to State Law."

From: Vaccari, Diane [mailto:Diane.Vaccari@fldoe.org]
Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2017 11:52 AM
To: Cynthia Saunders <saundersc@manateeschools.net>
Subject: requested statute/rules

******* WARNING: This email was sent from a source outside of the Manatee County School District!!**

I have attached the statute/rules I described on the phone with you this morning:

- Statute 1003.435 contains the underage tester information about the school board rule requirement
- Rule 6A-6.0201 contains specifics of High School Equivalency Diploma
- Rule 6A-6.0212 contains the specifics of the Exit Option Program

The Performance-Based Exit Option Program is administered by the Drop Out Prevention Office:

<http://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/dropout-prevention/>

Contact is:

Tameka Thomas, Program Specialist IV

Phone: 850 245 0845

Email: Tameka.Thomas@fldoe.org



If you have any other questions, let me know.

Diane Vaccari
Manager - High School Equivalency Diploma Program
Division of Career and Adult Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 634, Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850-245-0449 Office



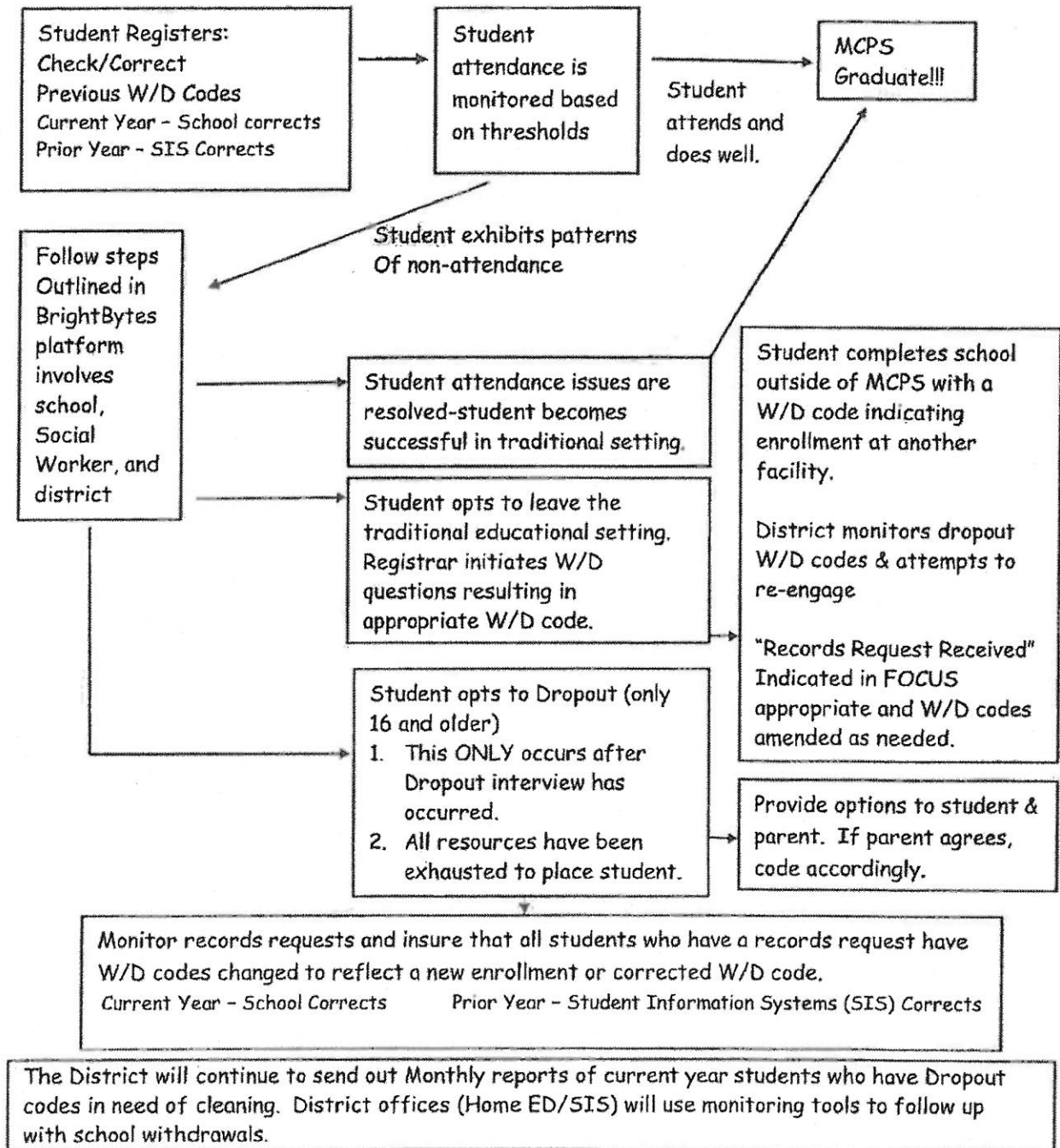
Please note that Florida has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from state officials are public records available to the public and media upon request.

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Dropout Prevention Guidelines

Purpose: This document will articulate all of the processes that should be followed by schools and district personnel to continue to improve the dropout/graduation rate for Manatee County Public Schools (MCPS).

Dropout Flow Chart



- I. Registrar Responsibilities
- II. Guidance Counselor Responsibilities
- III. Attendance Responsibilities
- IV. District Responsibilities

I. Registrar Responsibilities

Since the Registrar is the point of contact for all students entering and leaving a school, the role of this position is vital in maintaining the most accurate enrollment and withdrawal coding for the district.

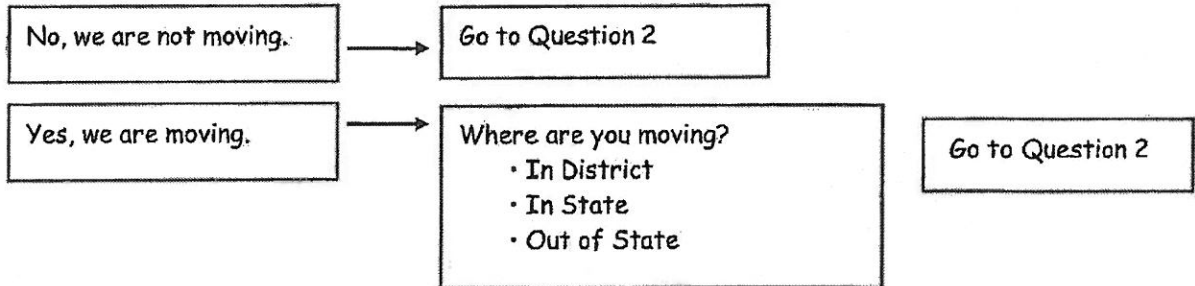
- A. When enrolling students, take a moment and look at the W/D codes that are in place for that student. If you see any of the following codes, take action to correct the code because you have the opportunity to determine where the student has been. If the code is during the current school year, the school may make the change. If it is for the prior year, Student Information Systems (SIS) Department must make the change in the amendment system.

Code	Definition
DNE	Did Not Enter
W05	Any student age 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intent of returning
W13	Any K-12 student withdrawn from school due to court action
W15	Any K-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to nonattendance
W18	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to medical reasons
W21	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to being expelled - Never coded by the school - by MIS ONLY
W22	Any K-12 student whose whereabouts is unknown.

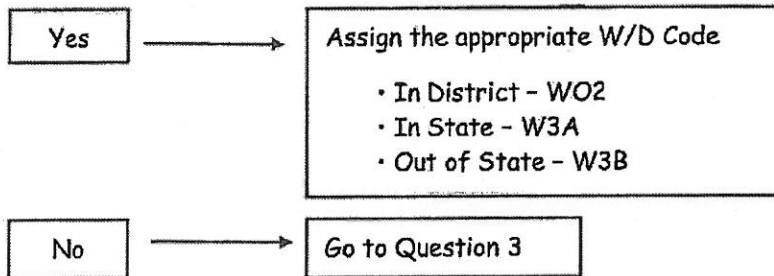
- B. State Statute requires "Parental Confirmation" when determining the correct W/D code to use for students leaving a school. If a student comes in and states they are going to W/D, the student must conference with a Guidance Counselor or School Administrator.

If a parent or legal guardian calls or comes in to W/D the student, the following questions should be asked:

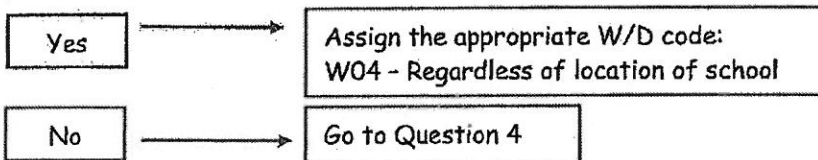
1. Are you moving?



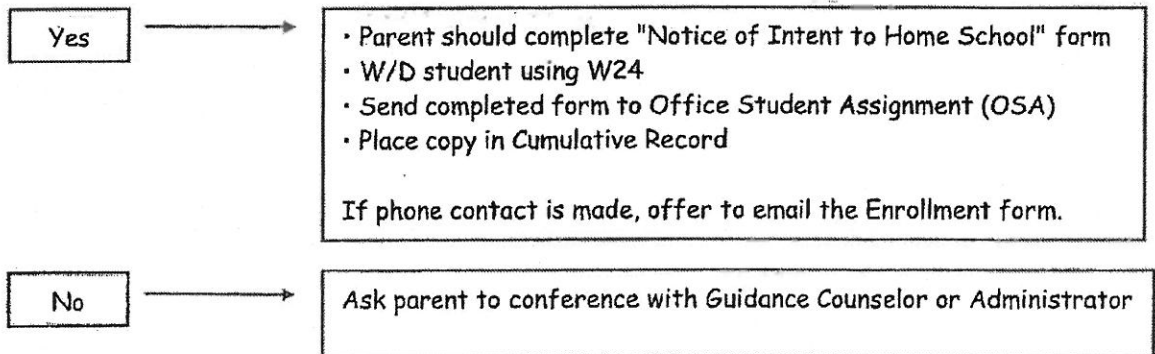
2. Will your child be attending a public school?



3. Will your child be attending a private school?



4. Will your child be completing work via the internet (Florida Virtual, e-Tech, Other) or from Home?



II. Guidance Counselor Responsibilities

A. Student who exhibits a pattern of non-attendance:

Once these students have been identified then the GC should follow the steps that are outlined in the BrightBytes platform.

B. Student who expresses an interest in dropping out:

a. Discuss options with student with emphasis on Home Education and other programs

Benefits of Home Ed Enrollment

- Allows student greatest flexibility to try other forms of education
- Maintains an enrollment with MCPS for ease of transition
- Student can participate in Extra-curriculars/ Athletics if eligible
- No potential loss of funding for the parent (if applicable)
- Student maintains Driver's License

b. If the student's desire to drop out is imminent, must complete the Exit Interview Student Survey form.

III. Attendance Responsibilities

The attendance clerk at each school will be responsible for monitoring attendance, sending letters for non-attendance and providing data for CST meetings according to the District guidelines.

IV. School Administrator Responsibilities

1. Counseling students/parents when needed
2. Conduct Exit Interviews (16 or older), when needed
3. Monitor W/D practices at the school to insure integrity

V. District Responsibilities

The District will assist schools by providing the following:

1. Social Workers to perform various aspects of the truancy.
2. Continue to update Student Information Systems (SIS) when students successfully pass the GED.
3. Provide data back to schools regarding Dropout W/D codes of students who should be researched and cleaned on a monthly basis.
4. Assist with training of all parties.
5. Home Ed will monitor W24 codes and insure that these students have registered by comparing SIS data to internal database. Home Ed will engage official's when needed.
6. SIS office will perform frequent queries of W/D codes to ensure proper protocols are being followed.

Home Education Enrollment Process

For students enrolling in Home Education from Manatee County Public Schools, the following processes must be followed:

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian goes to the student's current school or Office Student Assignment (OSA) office to notify the registrar/guidance representative they wish to withdraw their child to Home Education.

2. Base-School Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date, and return the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form.
- Confirm that all textbooks and library books have been returned, and that all debts have been paid.
- Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form with a school stamp.
- Return the completed original copy of the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form to the parent/guardian, keeping a copy for your files. Send a copy to OSA so student is officially enrolled.

3. Home Education Paperwork:

- Once the original completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form is turned into the Home Education Office, confirm the form has been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the base-school representative.
- The parent/guardian and student can meet with Home Education personnel to receive resource information/options and discuss requirements or receive documents in the mail.

The student is now officially enrolled in Home Education.

Home Education Termination Process

For students terminating Home Education and returning to Manatee County Public Schools, the following processes must be followed:

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian contacts the Home Education office to notify that they wish to withdraw their child from Home Education.

2. Home Education Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date and return the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program form*.
- The Virtual School counselor reviews academic records from virtual schools and/or the student's portfolio to determine grades/units/credits earned.
 - i. Record this information on the Manatee District's Home Education Grade Report for *Incoming Students* form and attach documentation.
 - ii. Have the parent/guardian sign and date completed Grade Report form.
 - iii. Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program form* and *Grade Report forms* with the school stamp.
 - iv. If there are significant gaps in the academic records, or if the student failed to complete course work, notify the APC at the student's base-school via email.
 - v. Return the completed original copies of the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program form* and *Grade Report forms* to the parent/guardian, keeping a copy for your files pending notification from the student's base-school that the student has indeed enrolled. (At this time, no data entry has been done and the student is not officially terminated from Home Education.)
- Instruct the parent/guardian to report to the student's base-school within five (5) days to turn in the completed original *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program form* and *Grade Report forms*. Social Work Services must be notified if this does not occur.

3. Base-School Paperwork:

- Once the parent/guardian turns in the original completed *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program forms* have been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the Home Education office.
- Academically place the student based on information provided on the MCPS Home Education Grade Report form and any other information relayed by the Home Education/Virtual School counselor.
- Sign, date, and school stamp the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program form* and *Grade Report forms*, keeping the originals, and providing one copy to the parent/guardian.
- Via email, notify the Home Education office to officially withdraw the student to their base-school and perform required data entry.

**Manatee County
Exit Interview Student Survey**

School Name _____ School District _____
Student Name _____ Student DOB _____
Grade Level _____ Date _____

Directions: Please circle the response that best describes your experience or provide a description of your experience in the space provided.

1. Which of the following best describes your primary reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

2. Which of the following best describes your secondary reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

3. What would have improved your chances of staying in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning)
- B. Better teachers
- C. Smaller classes
- D. More individualized instruction
- E. Better communication with your teachers
- F. Better communication with your parents
- G. Increased parental involvement
- H. Less freedom and more supervision from parents
- I. Less freedom and more supervision from school officials
- J. Other

4. What actions did your school personnel take to keep you enrolled in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Provided student counseling | I. Discussed and offered participation in a credit recovery course/program |
| B. Scheduled a conference with parent(s), guardian(s), student, and school staff | J. Discussed and offered access to Dropout Prevention Program(s) (e.g., alternative education, disciplinary, teenage parent) |
| C. Discussed and offered options for tutoring | K. Tracked student progress (by teacher, counselor, social worker, graduation coach, etc.) |
| D. Discussed the consequences of dropping out | L. Changed or revised course schedule |
| E. Discussed and offered options for continuing education in a different environment (e.g., Adult Education, home school, virtual school, hospital homebound) | M. Implemented intervention contracts (e.g. attendance or behavior) |
| F. Discussed and offered alternative options for graduation (e.g., diploma options, GED Exit Option or GED Testing) | N. Student reported that school staff took no action |
| G. Conducted home visits | O. Other |
| H. Referred student to agencies/programs to address problems interfering with school success (e.g., substance abuse counseling, psychological counseling, family counselor) | |

Please check and sign below to certify that each of the following statements was addressed by school personnel.

I am at least 16 years of age and it is my intent to terminate my school enrollment. I received counseling from a guidance counselor or other school personnel which addressed the following:

- ☐ Terminating school enrollment prior to graduation will likely reduce my potential earnings and negatively affect my career options.
- ☐ Termination of school enrollment will result in the revocation/denial of my driving privileges until age 18.
- ☐ My reasons for leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Possible actions that could keep me from leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Options for continuing my education in a different environment, e.g., Adult Education or GED testing.
- ☐ For Bright Futures eligibility, GED students must complete credit requirements before taking GED exam.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
(if student is under 18 years of age)

School Personnel Signature: _____ Date: _____

Optional:

1. What is the highest level of education completed by your maternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

2. What is the highest level of education completed by your paternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

SECTION. 3

Tomorrows Registrar Meeting

From: Steve Wigginton
Sent: Monday, August 25, 2014 2:37 PM
To: DL-CUR MS Registrars;DL-CUR HS Registrars
Cc: Paula Nigrelli;Skip Wilhoit;Mike McCann
Subject: Tomorrows Registrar Meeting
Attachments: Withdrawal Codes.xlsm; Suspension of Driving Privilege.docx;
compliance letter.pdf; exit interview.pdf; Home-school
compliance letter.pdf

The included attachments are the basis of tomorrow's meeting.
Please, either make copies for reference during the meeting, or review the documents
and make notes re: questions / clarification.
(Paula Nigrelli is working on getting the DMV letters and the exit interview saved
on
the district website.)

Thank you,

Stephen P. Wigginton, MSW
MCPS Attendance Social Worker
(941) 751-6550, ext 2091
wiggints@manateeschools.net

From: Steve Wigginton
Sent: Monday, August 25, 2014 2:40 PM
To: DL-CUR ES Registrars
Subject: Tomorrows Registrar Training
Attachments: Withdrawal Codes.xlsm

The included attachment is the basis of tomorrow's meeting. Please, either make a copy for reference during the meeting, or review the document and make notes re: questions, etc.

Thank you,

Stephen P. Wigginton, MSW
MCPS Attendance Social Worker
(941) 751-6550, ext 2091
wiggints@manateeschools.net

	A Withdrawal Code	B Description	C Actions	D System Note Examples
1		<p>Any PK-12 student who was expected to attend a school but did not enter as expected for unknown reasons.</p> <p>Note: This code is entered in the student's record only at the beginning of the school year. Withdrawal code DNE stays in place until the whereabouts and educational status of a student are confirmed. (Do not use the DNE after day 10)</p>	<p>School registrars (or other specifically designated school personnel) must attempt to contact the homes of any student listed as DNE to try and determine the students whereabouts. Once the student's disposition has been determined, the registrar must make a note in the student information system. If student is located, the last withdrawal code for the previous year needs to be changed to the appropriate code and the current year's enrollment line needs to be removed "RMV". If the student cannot be located, then they shall remain listed as a DNE unless and until there is an actual code to replace the DNE code or an Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form is on file. Do NOT assign student a W05 or W15 code, if they cannot be located. Registrars must send the names of any students who are listed as DNE after the first 15 days of school to the district truancy department. These names will be forwarded to the state DMV for loss of driving privileges</p>	<p>1. Contact with parent on 9/04/14. Student has moved to Sarasota County. - W3A 2. Contact with student's aunt on 9/26/14. Student has moved to Georgia. - W3B 3. All phones disconnected. Cannot locate student. - W05</p>
2	DNE			
3	W01		No action necessary	No notes necessary

	A Withdrawal Code	B Description	C Actions	D System Note Examples
1			<p>School registrars must contact the home of any student not enrolled in another district school within 10 school days of receiving a W02 code to ascertain the reason for not enrolling. Registrars must forward the student's name to the district truancy office if a student has not enrolled in another district school within 10 school days of receiving a W02 code. Registrars should then properly code the student as a W-05 or W-15, as appropriate. There must be an Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form on file if a W05 code is used for students who are 16 or 17 years of age.</p> <p>Note: Registrars should obtain a working telephone number when the student and family withdraw from the school. Registrars should additionally keep an active log book for all students withdrawn under W-02 W-24 and W-26</p>	
4	W02	Any PK-12 student promoted, retained, or transferred to another school in the same district.		<p>1. Student indicated their intent to enroll at Bayshore High School on 10/14/14.</p> <p>2. Student failed to enroll by 10/28/14. Attempted to contact family without success. Name given to district truancy office and code changed to W-15</p>
5	W3A	Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a public school in another district in Florida.	No action necessary	Parent/guardian indicated on 2/07/15 they were moving to Pinellas County.
6	W3B	Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a public school out-of-state.	No action necessary	Parent/guardian indicated on 10/29/14 they were moving to Georgia.
7	W04	Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a non-public school in or out of the state.	No action necessary	Parent/guardian indicated on 1/16/15 they were enrolling at a private school.

	A		B		C		D	
	Withdrawal Code	Description	Actions		System Note Examples			
1	W05	Any student aged 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intention of returning. Note: This code may only be used for students aged 16 or 17 who have filed an Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form and completed an exit interview with their guidance counselor.	School registrars should not issue a W05 for any student age 16 or 17 until they have received confirmation from their guidance department or administration that the student has filed an Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form. Students who are age 18 or older may be issued a W05 without filing this form.		Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form confirmed on 3/24/15.			
8	W06	Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma.	No action necessary		No notes necessary			
9	W6A	Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma, based on the 18-credit college preparatory graduation option.	No action necessary		No notes necessary			
10	W6B	Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma, based on the 18-credit career preparatory graduation option.	No action necessary		No notes necessary			
11	W07	Any student who graduated from school with a special diploma based on option one -mastery of Sunshine Standards for Special Diploma.	No action necessary		No notes necessary			
12								

	A	B	C	D
	Withdrawal Code	Description	Actions	System Note Examples
1		Any student who received a certificate of completion. The student met the minimum credits and local requirements, but did not pass the state approved graduation test or an alternate assessment, and/or did not achieve the required GPA.		
13	W08	Note: This does not prevent a non-disabled student from returning for a 13 th year of educational services. This does not prevent a student with disabilities from returning to receive educational	No action necessary	No notes necessary
14	W8A	Any student who met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma except passing the graduation test and received a certificate of completion and is eligible to take College Placement Test and be admitted to remedial or credit courses at a state community college as appropriate.	No action necessary	No notes necessary

	A		B	C		D
	Withdrawal Code	Description		Actions	System Note Examples	
1						
15	W09	Any student who received a special certificate of completion, is properly classified as an eligible exceptional education student, met applicable local requirements and was unable to meet appropriate special state minimum requirements. Note: This does not prevent a student with disabilities from returning to receive educational services until age 22.		No action necessary	No notes necessary	
16	W10	Any student who completed the GED Exit Option Model Program requirements, passed the GED Tests and the state approved graduation test, and was awarded a standard diploma.		No action necessary	No notes necessary	
17	W12	Any PK-12 student withdrawn from school due to death.		If a student dies between the end of one school year and the start of the next school year, the school must go back to the previous school year's record for the student and enter the W12 code and the date of death. The student should be deleted from the new school year file. The death of a student in all other cases is to be entered as a W12 with the date of the death.	Student confirmed deceased on 7/23/14	

	A Withdrawal Code	B Description	C Actions	D System Note Examples
1				
18	W13	<p>Any PK-12 student withdrawn from school due to court action.</p> <p>Example: The court remands a student to an adult correctional facility, juvenile detention facility, or other state program.</p>	<p>Code W13 should seldom be used. If a student is assigned to an adult correctional facility, the district office will determine whether the educational program in the adult facility is provided by a local school district. If so, the student should be coded W02 or W3A, as appropriate. Likewise, any student remanded to a DCF or DJJ facility, shall also be coded as W02 or W3A, as appropriate. If the educational program is provided by a community college or adult education facility, the student should be coded W26. Students detained by court action should not be withdrawn until notification is received from the district office.</p>	<p>Received confirmation on 11/25/14 that the student is enrolled in an adult correctional facility and has declined participation in the adult educational program.</p>
19	W15	Any PK-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to nonattendance	<p>School registrars are to withdraw students as a W15 only after 15 consecutive unexcused absences; ESE students must also be investigated by the school's ESE-chair and have withdrawal approval from the principal or designee. All W15 codes should be reported to the district truancy office by the registrar as they are entered.</p>	<p>Student absent unexcused from 9/02-9/27. No contact at listed telephone numbers.</p>
20	W18	Any PK-12 student who withdraws from school due to medical reasons	<p>Do not use this code to withdraw a student for: Hospital Homebound. All HH students need to remain enrolled at their home school in order to receive services. Home education - use code W24.</p>	<p>Student confirmed as hospitalized in critical care on 12/10/14.</p>

	A	B	C	D
	Withdrawal Code	Description	Actions	System Note Examples
1	W21	Any PK-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to being expelled with no educational services.	If a student who has been through the expulsion process is offered and accepts alternative placement, school registrars will make a note in the system, following direction from the district office. If the expelled student transfers to a non-public school, the W21 code remains and an appropriate note is made. If the expelled student transfers to another school district, use code W3A.	1. Student expelled without services on 2/14/15. 2. Student expelled on 2/14/15 but accepted alternative placement at Horizons Academy, per district office. 3. Received request for records from private school on 3/15/15.
21	W22	Any PK-12 student whose whereabouts is unknown and required documented efforts to locate the student are maintained per s.1003.26, Florida Statutes.	W22 should only be issued after multiple documented efforts to locate the student and family, including a home-visit have been attempted, or in the instance of a runaway student after a runaway report case number is submitted.	1. Calls made to home on 8/26, 8/27, & 8/28/14 - No answer. Home visit made on 9/01/15 and the home did not appear to be occupied. 2. Student listed as runaway on 1/20/15. BPD report# 123-45678
22	W23	Any PK-12 student who withdraws from school for any reason other than W01-W22 or W24-W27.	This should not be used unless all other avenues have been exhausted and the district specifically approves its use. Students with disabilities who reach age 22 without receiving a standard diploma, special diploma, certificate of completion, or special certificate of completion should be assigned this withdrawal code.	Student reached 22nd birthday on 11/23/14 and failed to earn any diploma or certificate of completion.
23				

	A Withdrawal Code	B Description	C Actions	D System Note Examples
1			Use this code for any student who withdraws to be home schooled. Do not use this code for Hospital Homebound students. HH students remain enrolled at their home schools to receive services. Registrars should additionally keep an active log book for all students withdrawn under W-02, W-24, and W-26 codes. Registrars must forward the student's name to the district's Parent Information Center, if a student has not been enrolled as an N998 within 10 school days of receiving a W24 code. Registrars should then properly code the student as a W-05 or W-15, as appropriate. There must be an Intent to Terminate Enrollment Form on file if a W05 code is used for students who are 16 or 17 years of age.	
24	W24	Any PK-12 student who withdraws from school to attend a home education program		<p>1. Parent stated they intended to home school their child on 3/17/15.</p> <p>2. As of 3/31/15 no N998 code entered. Student's name forwarded to district and code changed to W-15.</p>
25	W25	Any student under the age of six who withdraws from school	Use this code for students who are not 6 years of age by February 1st of the current school year. Students under the minimum compulsory attendance age who appear as DNEs should be changed to code W25 after the first 10 days of school.	No notes necessary

	A	B	C	D
1	Withdrawal Code	Description	Actions	System Note Examples
	<p data-bbox="357 1260 487 1848">Pending O</p> <p data-bbox="519 1281 714 1743">Any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult program prior to completion of graduation requirements.</p> <p data-bbox="600 1785 633 1869">W/26</p>	<p data-bbox="292 609 925 1239">W/26 should only be issued once a student has taken the TABE test and a determination has been made to their educational placement. Students scoring above a Level 8 may be coded as W/26 and enrolled in an adult educational program. Students scoring below a Level 8 will need to be enrolled in the district GED prep program and withdrawn as a W/02. Registrars must forward the student's name to the district truancy office if a student has not enrolled in the adult education program or GED prep program within 10 school days of receiving a W/26 or W/02 code. Registrars should then properly code the student as a W-05 or W/15. The district truancy office must then contact the home of any student not enrolled in the adult education or GED prep program, to ascertain the reason for not enrolling.</p>	<p data-bbox="341 252 860 567">1. Parent indicated on 4/15 the student was withdrawing to attend MTI for his GED. 2. Student failed to enroll at MTI code changed to W-05. 3. Student not enrolled at MTI as of 4/31. Contacted parent and the student was involved in an auto accident. Will check back on 5/12 for enrollment.</p>	
26		<p data-bbox="974 1239 1153 1743">Any student who graduated from school with a special diploma based on Option Two-mastery of employment and community competencies.</p> <p data-bbox="1039 1785 1071 1869">W/27</p>	No action necessary	No notes necessary
27				

	A		B		C		D	
	Withdrawal Code		Description		Actions		System Note Examples	
1								
28	WFA		Any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18 credit college preparatory graduation option and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	
29	WFT		Any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternative assessment.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	
30	WFB		Any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on as 18 credit career preparatory graduation option and satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through an alternative assessment.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	
31	WPO		This code should be used when an ESE student has graduated with a special diploma, but returns to school to pursue a standard diploma, then leaves school before the standard diploma is earned.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	

	A		B		C		D	
	Withdrawal Code		Description		Actions		System Note Examples	
1								
32	WFW		Any student with disabilities who graduated from school with a standard diploma and an FCAT waiver.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	
33	WGA		Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements, passed the GED Tests, satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment, and was awarded a State of Florida High School Performance-Based Diploma.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	
34	WGD		Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements and passed the GED Tests, but did not pass the state approved graduation test and was awarded a State of Florida diploma.		No action necessary		No notes necessary	

**Florida Department of Education
Exit Interview Student Survey**

School Name _____ School District _____
Student Name _____ Student DOB _____
Grade Level _____ Date _____

Directions: Please circle the response that best describes your experience or provide a description of your experience in the space provided.

1. Which of the following best describes your **primary** reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

2. Which of the following best describes your **secondary** reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

3. What would have improved your chances of staying in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning)
- B. Better teachers
- C. Smaller classes
- D. More individualized instruction
- E. Better communication with your teachers
- F. Better communication with your parents
- G. Increased parental involvement
- H. Less freedom and more supervision from parents
- I. Less freedom and more supervision from school officials
- J. Other

4. What actions did your school personnel take to keep you enrolled in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Provided student counseling | I. Discussed and offered participation in a credit recovery course/program |
| B. Scheduled a conference with parent(s), guardian(s), student, and school staff | J. Discussed and offered access to Dropout Prevention Program(s) (e.g., alternative education, disciplinary, teenage parent) |
| C. Discussed and offered options for tutoring | K. Tracked student progress (by teacher, counselor, social worker, graduation coach, etc.) |
| D. Discussed the consequences of dropping out | L. Changed or revised course schedule |
| E. Discussed and offered options for continuing education in a different environment (e.g., Adult Education, home school, virtual school, hospital homebound) | M. Implemented intervention contracts (e.g. attendance or behavior) |
| F. Discussed and offered alternative options for graduation (e.g., diploma options, GED Exit Option or GED Testing) | N. Student reported that school staff took no action |
| G. Conducted home visits | O. Other |
| H. Referred student to agencies/programs to address problems interfering with school success (e.g., substance abuse counseling, psychological counseling, family counselor) | |

Please check and sign below to certify that each of the following statements was addressed by school personnel.

I am at least 16 years of age and it is my intent to terminate my school enrollment. I received counseling from a guidance counselor or other school personnel which addressed the following:

- ☐ Terminating school enrollment prior to graduation will likely reduce my potential earnings and negatively affect my career options.
- ☐ Termination of school enrollment will result in the revocation/denial of my driving privileges until age 18.
- ☐ My reasons for leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Possible actions that could keep me from leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Options for continuing my education in a different environment, e.g., Adult Education or GED testing.
- ☐ For Bright Futures eligibility, GED students must complete credit requirements before taking GED exam.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
(if student is under 18 years of age)

School Personnel Signature: _____ Date: _____

Optional:

1. What is the highest level of education completed by your maternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

2. What is the highest level of education completed by your paternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

APPENDIX A

NOTIFICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES
STUDENT COMPLIANCE WITH ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS
FOR REINSTATEMENT OF DRIVING PRIVILEGE/ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSURE

This is to provide verification to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles that the following student, who received Notice of Intent to Suspend/Withhold Eligibility for Licensure due to non-attendance is in compliance with attendance requirements in S. 322.091(1).

Student's Full Legal Name: _____
(First, Middle, Last)

Mailing Address: _____

Driver's License/Control Number: _____ Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Social Security Number: _____

District Name: _____ District Number: _____

School Name: _____ School/Institution Number: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Authorized Signature of School Official: _____
(Signature must be notarized or school seal affixed)

Title: _____

Typed or Printed Name of Person Signing Form: _____

Notary Public
State of Florida at Large

My commission expires: ____/____/____

School Seal

Original signatures required.

For additional information contact:

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

If the license is not suspended, mail or fax this completed form to: DHSMV, Field Support Help Desk, 2900 Apalachee Parkway, MS #67, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0570. The fax number is (850)-617-5136. If the license is suspended, this form should be presented to a driver's licenses or tax collector's office for reinstatement of driving privilege. A \$45 reinstatement fee is required for a suspended license. Note: This form may only be accepted within 30 calendar days of its completion.

HSMV 72870 (02/14)

APPENDIX B

NOTIFICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES
STUDENT COMPLIANCE WITH ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS
FOR A HOME EDUCATION PROGRAM

This is to provide verification to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles that the following student, who received Notice of Intent to Suspend/Withhold Eligibility for Licensure due to non-attendance has been enrolled in a home based education program 30 consecutive days.

Student's Full Legal Name: _____
(First, Middle, Last)

Mailing Address: _____

Driver's License/Control Number: _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Social Security Number: _____

District Name: _____ District Number: _____

School Name: _____ School/Institution Number: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Authorized Signature of School Official: _____
(Signature must be notarized or school seal affixed)

Title: _____

Typed or Printed Name of Person Signing Form: _____

Notary Public
State of Florida at Large

My commission expires: ____/____/____

School Seal

Original signatures required.

For additional information contact:

Name _____ Telephone: _____

If the license is not suspended, mail or fax this completed form to: DHSMV, Field Support Help Desk, 2900 Apalachee Parkway, MS #67, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0570. The fax number is (850)-617-5136. If the license is suspended, this form should be presented to a driver's licenses or tax collector's office for reinstatement of driving privilege. A \$45 reinstatement fee is required for a suspended license. Note: This form may only be accepted within 30 calendar days of its completion.

HSMV 72870 (02/14)

Suspension of Driving Privilege

Per state guidelines, and senior district management, there will be some changes in the way the district address the DHSMV / DOE driving privilege suspension program.

The district will no longer be submitting names of students to the school sites for review before submission.

If the information in the FOCUS system indicates that a student has accrued 15 unexcused absences in a 90-calendar day period, or the student has been issued a DNE; W05; W13; W15; W18; or W21, a FOCUS-based report (State DMV Report) will capture that name.

The list of names captured via that report will be electronically transmitted to the DHSMV on a weekly basis.

The following have been drawn directly from the state's *Technical Assistance Paper* for this program which was released last year:

Notification to the DHSMV initiates one of two actions:

The DHSMV will post a Notice of Intent to Suspend driving privileges to the driver record of all reported **licensed students**. These students may lose their driver's license unless they comply with attendance requirements or;

The DHSMV will post an education noncompliance entry, to the record created for this specific purpose, for all reported **unlicensed students**, and they may not apply for a driver's license until relevant attendance requirements are satisfied.

Are 16-or 17-year-old students who sign a declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment excluded from these provisions? No. A 16- or 17-year-old student who withdraws from school is not excluded from being reported to the DHSMV for sanction. Pursuant to section 1003.21(1)(c) and 1002.41 (Appendix H), Florida Statutes, a student who is 16 or 17 years old may withdraw from school if he or she files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the district school board. The declaration must acknowledge that terminating school enrollment is likely to reduce the student's earning potential and must be signed by the student and the student's parent. It is recommended that school staff also inform students and parents regarding the potential loss of driving privileges. The district must notify the student's parent regarding the receipt of the student's intent to terminate school enrollment.

Are expelled students affected? Yes. Expelled students should be reported as soon as they are officially withdrawn from school. However, a student may not be affected if he or she enrolls in another school, home education program or an alternative to expulsion program and meets relevant attendance requirements.

Are days missed as a result of suspensions counted in the unexcused absences reported to the DHSMV? No. An out-of-school suspension is an administrative action that prohibits a student from attending school as compared to a truancy issue.

Which students should not be reported to the DHSMV? Students who transfer to another school within the school district (W02), to another public school in or out of the state (W03); or to a private school in or out of the state (W04) should not be reported to the DHSMV for noncompliance of attendance requirements unless they have accumulated 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days or students who have withdrawn from school with a dropout code of DNE, W05, W13, W15, W18, W21, W22 or W23. Note: This includes students transferring to a hospital homebound program within the school district or out of the school district.

Are public schools responsible for informing students that their driving privileges may be affected for withdrawing from school? No. Section 1003.26(1), Florida Statutes, requires the school principal or designee to contact a student's parent to determine the reason for an unexcused absence or an absence for which the reason is unknown. It is recommended that schools inform students and parents of the consequences of accumulating unexcused absences and of dropping out of school, including the potential loss of driving privileges.

Are public schools required to notify parents and guardians when excessive unexcused absences occur? Yes. Section 1003.26(1), Florida Statutes, requires the school principal or principal's designee to contact a student's parent to determine the reason for each unexcused absence or absence for which the reason is unknown. If a student accumulates at least five unexcused absences or absences for which the reasons are unknown within a calendar month, or 10 unexcused absences or absences for which the reasons are unknown within 90 calendar days, the student's teacher shall report this pattern of nonattendance to the school principal. The principal must refer the case to the school's child study team to determine an intervention plan to most effectively address the problem.

What is the time limit for school districts to electronically transmit the transaction code to cancel the Notice of Intent to Suspend letter or for a licensed student who should not have been reported to the DHSMV? It is highly recommended that school districts electronically transmit the appropriate transaction code to the DHSMV within 20 calendar days from the date of the notice. After 20 days, attempts to transmit the transaction code will be electronically transmitted back to the district in the summary (SUM) file as an error. Electronic transmissions to correct records only apply to students with a learner's permit or a driver's license.

Is it possible for school districts to electronically transmit the transaction code to cancel an education noncompliance entry posted to a DHSMV record? No. The transaction code for cancellation only applies to the Notice of Intent to Suspend. Education noncompliance is [for unlicensed students reported as out-of-compliance with attendance requirements.] It is recommended that the school supply the student with a letter to indicate he or she should not have been reported to the DHSMV. The letter should be on school letterhead addressed to the DHSMV and include the principal or designee's signature; the student's name,

date of birth and social security number (if available); and a statement that the student should not have been reported to the DHSMV.

What happens if a student goes into a home education program and is assigned a W24 withdrawal code? Upon the transfer of a student into a home education program, he or she ceases to be the responsibility of the school district for the purpose of these provisions and should not be reported to the DHSMV.

What happens if a student is assigned a W24 withdrawal code for home education but does not register within 30 school days with the district's home education office? The student should be reported to the DHSMV.

What are the criteria to determine if a student has satisfied relevant attendance requirements? Public middle and high school students must attend school for 30 consecutive school days with no unexcused absences in order for driving privileges to be reinstated. The count begins the first day after the last unexcused absence.

Who supplies the form used to verify that a student has been in compliance for 30 consecutive school days? Form HSMV 72870 is provided with this technical assistance paper and should be used to verify student compliance with attendance requirements. School superintendents are responsible for dissemination of the form to all educational settings within the school district involved in the license reinstatement process. Only this form should be used for verification of compliance.

Can attendance requirements be satisfied through an online program for full-time students? Yes. Public and private school online educational programs are acceptable for satisfying attendance requirements.

(the state's recommendation is 6 weeks of being considered compliant with the individual district's or schools's requirements for the on-line program)

Is Florida Virtual School (FLVS) an acceptable online program for reinstatement of driving privileges for full-time students? Yes.

Is FLVS responsible for issuing reinstatement forms? Yes.

What are the procedures for students or parents to request a hardship waiver? Section 322.091(3), Florida Statutes, provides that a minor or the parent or guardian of a minor has 15 calendar days after the date of receipt of the Notice of Intent to Suspend to request a hardship waiver hearing before the public school principal, the principal's designee for the purpose of reviewing the pending suspension of his or her driving privilege.

Which educational settings are required to conduct hardship waiver hearings? Public school principals, the principal's designee are required to conduct hardship waiver hearings for the purpose of reviewing the pending suspension of driving privileges.

What are the guidelines to be used for approval of a hardship waiver?

Section 322.091(3)(b), Florida Statutes, states:

“The public school principal, the principal’s designee, waive the requirements of subsection (1) for any minor under the school’s jurisdiction for whom a personal or family hardship requires that the minor have a driver’s license for his or her own, or his or her family’s, employment or medical care.”

What is the procedure for school districts to advise DHSMV of a student’s request for a hardship waiver hearing? All requests for hardship waiver hearings from school districts should be transmitted electronically to the DHSMV.

(the school informs the district of any pending hardship waiver hearings)

Is there a time restriction for school districts to electronically transmit a request for a hardship waiver hearing? Yes. Districts have 20 calendar days from the date of the Notice of Intent to Suspend to transmit a request for a hardship waiver hearing.

Can hardship waivers be issued for a limited duration? Yes. The public school principal, principal’s designee is encouraged to approve the waiver request for a specified period of time. It is recommended that hardship waivers be reviewed after 90 calendar days following the date of approval.

(the school-site reviews the agreement it entered into for a hardship waiver)

Can a hardship waiver hearing be denied if requested within 15 calendar days from the date of receipt of Notice of Intent to Suspend?

No. The public school principal, principal’s designee should conduct the waiver hearing. In addition, the request for a hearing should be electronically transmitted to the DHSMV within the allotted timeframe. Unlicensed minors are not eligible for a hardship waiver hearing.

Are reinstatement forms accepted with a compliance date prior to the date of the Notice of Intent to Suspend/Withhold Eligibility for Licensure letter? No. These forms are not valid. The department cannot process reinstatement forms to remove an entry that was not on a DHSMV record prior to the date of the Notice of Intent to Suspend/Withhold Eligibility for Licensure letter.

Are reinstatement forms accepted without a school seal or a notarized signature of an authorized school official? No.

If a public school initially reports a student to the DHSMV with a withdrawal code calculated in the dropout rate, and then changes the code to a withdrawal code W02, W03 or W04, to clear a student’s record of the noncompliance, how does the public school report this change to the DHSMV? School districts have 20 calendar days from the date of the Notice of Intent to Suspend to electronically transmit the appropriate cancellation code for licensed drivers. After 20 days a status letter is required. Status letters are always required for students who are not licensed.

How should a school respond when a student should not have been reported to the DHSMV? School districts have 20 calendar days from the date of the Notice of Intent to Suspend to electronically transmit the appropriate cancellation code for licensed drivers. After 20 days a status letter is required. The letter should be faxed to the DHSMV at 850-617-5136. Status letters are always required for students who are not licensed.

(the school reports the names sent in error to the district for electronic transmission to the DHSMV within the time-frame above; after the 20-day window, or for unlicensed students, the school send the status letter per above)

Is Job Corps an acceptable educational program to satisfy attendance requirements?
Yes.

Can private schools issue a status letter to indicate a student should not have been reported to the DHSMV? Yes.

Can completing requirements for a standard high school diploma, State of Florida high School diploma (GED®), special diploma or a certificate of completion be used to reinstate a student's driving privilege? Yes. The school or educational institution should complete form HSMV 72870 for the student when requirements for a high school diploma, State of Florida high school diploma, special diploma or certificate of completion have been completed. Forms must be dated when graduation occurred.

Can a Special Diploma-Option Two be used to reinstate driving privilege? Yes. This type of diploma is based on attendance in an employment setting as specified in a student's individual educational plan. A reinstatement form must be submitted to document 30 consecutive school days of attendance with no unexcused absences.

Can emancipation by virtue of becoming a parent satisfy enrollment and attendance requirements for reinstatement of the driving privilege? No.

What are the reinstatement requirements for students who withdraw from school due to pregnancy? Students who withdraw from school due to pregnancy must be reported to the DHSMV. To reinstate their driving privilege or be eligible for licensure, they must satisfy relevant attendance requirements. In cases involving a physician's order for bed rest, the hospital homebound program is an acceptable alternative. If a pregnant student is eligible for the hospital homebound program, the student should be coded W02 and not reported to the DHSMV for noncompliance.

What are the reinstatement requirements for students who withdraw from the school's teenage parent program? Students must satisfy relevant attendance requirements. However, re-enrollment in the school's teenage parent program is also an option. Florida Statutes states that students participating in teenage parent programs are exempt from minimum attendance requirements for absences related to pregnancy or parenting but are required to make up work missed due to absence.

If a student receives the Notice of Intent to Suspend driving privileges at the end of a school year, can consecutive school days of attendance with no unexcused absences be carried over to the next school year to satisfy attendance requirements for reinstatement? Yes.

Does attendance in summer school satisfy attendance requirements for reinstatement? Yes.

Who is responsible for completing the reinstatement form to verify compliance with enrollment requirements for a student enrolled in a home education program using curriculum provided by a correspondence school? The FDOE recommends that the school district's home education office issue form (HSMV 72871) after the student has been registered 30 school days.

Are students enrolled in a school district's hospital homebound program eligible to be reported to the DHSMV ? No.

When can local driver's license offices reinstate a student's driving privilege? For local driver's license offices to reinstate driving privileges, the Notice of Intent to Suspend and a suspension order should appear on the driver record. The completed DHSMV's reinstatement form should be presented to the local driver's license office to reinstate a minor's driving privilege. The form should include the school's seal or a notarized signature. If a student should not have been reported and 20 days have elapsed, it is recommended that he or she obtain a status letter from the school responsible for reporting the student's attendance as noncompliant.

SECTION 4

From: Paula Nigrelli

Friday, May 30, 2014 7:04:00 AM



Subject: Elementary Withdrawal Form

To: Debbie Hatfield, Birdena Starline, Sharon Miller, Judy McKie,
Lucille Reyes, Patty Krause, Rosa Castro, Debby Hampton,
Judy Boardman

Attachments: ES Withdrawal Form - DRAFT.docx (43K)

Hello Ladies,

I have attached an Elementary Withdrawal Form that I created. We will begin to use this the 2014-15 school year.

I would appreciate it if you would look this over and give me some feedback on it - thoughts, suggestions, thumbs-up.

This will be used when a student withdraws from your school, even if the withdrawal is done after the fact. I did find out for you that a progress report can be printed that is "up to the minute" in FOCUS. This should be done at the time that you do the withdrawal and a **copy** of the progress report along with a **copy** of the withdrawal form should be given to the parent to take to their next school, regardless of whether it is in or out of district. We will talk more about the procedure as time goes on.

Paula Nigrelli
School Accountability Data Specialist
School District of Manatee County
Ph: 941-708-8770 ext. 2198
FAX: 941-708-8485
nigrellp@manateeschools.net



School District of Manatee County

DRAFT

School Name _____

Ph: _____

School Address _____

Fax: _____

City, State Zip Code _____

Elementary Withdrawal Form

Student _____ DOB _____ Grade _____

Teacher _____ External ID# _____ Alias ID # _____

Date Enrolled _____ Withdrawal Date _____ Withdrawal Code/Reason _____

New School _____ City _____ State _____

Parent/Guardian's Forwarding Address and Phone Numbers

Phone _____

Staff: Please initial to confirm notification

Teacher _____ ESE Spec. _____ ELL Spec. _____ Clinic _____ Media _____ Cafeteria _____

Cum Folder, Health Records, and all special service records should be sent to the Registrar's Office.

Items to be placed in cumulative folder

Report Card/Progress Report/ Transfer Grades
Home Language Survey
Cover Sheet from IEP (if applicable)
ESOL Folder

Outstanding Fines

Library Books _____ Initial _____
Textbooks _____ Initial _____
Cafeteria _____ Initial _____
Misc. Fines _____ Initial _____
Program Fees _____ Initial _____

Registrar Checklist

_____ RTI Paperwork	_____ ESOL Folder Included	_____ ESE Folders Included
_____ Health Folder Included	_____ Attendance in Cum Folder	_____ Special Areas Notified
_____ Bio/Enrollment form in Cum Folder	_____ 504 Paperwork	_____ Logbook completed

Received cum folder from teacher on: _____

Sent cum folder or copies to new school on: _____

Enrolling Parent / Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Schedule

Period	Subject	Teacher / Room	W/D Grade	Teacher Signature
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
Ex	Speech / Language			

SECTION 5

ES Withdrawal Form

From: Paula Nigrelli
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2014 9:55 PM
To: DL-CUR ES Registrars
Cc: Annette Codellia; Judy Laurent; Cristina Aburto; Jennifer Blair
Subject: ES Withdrawal Form
Attachments: ES Withdrawal Form - DRAFT.docx

Hello Everyone,

This is the ES Withdrawal Form. Please use this whenever you withdraw a student, in county or out of county. The importance of the form is documentation and the opportunity to send transfer grades to the receiving school.

Please give a copy of the form to the parent. I will send more official documentation in the near future.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this process.

Thanks,

Paula Nigrelli
State Reports Specialist 1
School District of Manatee County
Ph: 941-708-8770 ext. 2198
FAX: 941-708-8485
nigrellp@manateeschools.net



School District of Manatee County

DRAFT

School Name _____

Ph: _____

School Address _____

Fax: _____

City, State Zip Code _____

Elementary Withdrawal Form

Student _____ DOB _____ Grade _____

Teacher _____ External ID# _____ Alias ID # _____

Date Enrolled _____ Withdrawal Date _____ Withdrawal Code/Reason _____

New School _____ City _____ State _____

Parent/Guardian's Forwarding Address and Phone Numbers

Phone _____

Staff: Please initial to confirm notification

Teacher _____ ESE Spec. _____ ELL Spec. _____ Clinic _____ Media _____ Cafeteria _____

Cum Folder, Health Records, and all special service records should be sent to the Registrar's Office.

Items to be placed in cumulative folder

Report Card/Progress Report/ Transfer Grades
Home Language Survey
Cover Sheet from IEP (if applicable)
ESOL Folder

Outstanding Fines

Library Books _____ Initial _____
Textbooks _____ Initial _____
Cafeteria _____ Initial _____
Misc. Fines _____ Initial _____
Program Fees _____ Initial _____

Registrar Checklist

_____ RTI Paperwork	_____ ESOL Folder Included	_____ ESE Folders Included
_____ Health Folder Included	_____ Attendance in Cum Folder	_____ Special Areas Notified
_____ Bio/Enrollment form in Cum Folder	_____ 504 Paperwork	_____ Logbook completed

Received cum folder from teacher on: _____

Sent cum folder or copies to new school on: _____

Enrolling Parent / Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Schedule

Period	Subject	Teacher / Room	W/D Grade	Teacher Signature
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
Ex	Speech / Language			

SECTION 6



HORIZONS ACADEMY

Home of the Sharks

1910 27TH Street East

Bradenton, FL 34208

Phone (941) 714-7470 Fax (941) 708-6417

Student's Name _____

I.D.# _____

Grade Level _____

Date Enrolled _____

Date Withdrawn _____

Reason for Withdrawal/WD Code _____

Date of Birth _____

New School _____

Location _____

****Please Note**** If student has been in class for at least five (5) days, student gets a withdrawal grade.

Academic Grading Scale: A = 90-100 Outstanding

B = 80-89 Above Average

C = 70-79 Average

D = 60-69 Lowest Acceptable F = 0-59 Failure

I = Incomplete

NG = No Grade

Subject	W/D Grades	Teacher Signature

REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE _____



School District of Manatee County

DRAFT

School Name

Ph:

School Address

Fax:

City, State Zip Code

Elementary Withdrawal Form

Student _____ DOB _____ Grade _____

Teacher _____ External ID# _____ Alias ID # _____

Date Enrolled _____ Withdrawal Date _____ Withdrawal Code/Reason _____

New School _____ City _____ State _____

Parent/Guardian's Forwarding Address and Phone Numbers

_____ Phone _____

Staff: Please initial to confirm notification

Teacher _____ ESE Spec. _____ ELL Spec. _____ Clinic _____ Media _____ Cafeteria _____

Cum Folder, Health Records, and all special service records should be sent to the Registrar's Office.

Items to be placed in cumulative folder

Report Card/Progress Report/ Transfer Grades
Home Language Survey
Cover Sheet from IEP (if applicable)
ESOL Folder

Outstanding Fines

Library Books _____ Initial _____
Textbooks _____ Initial _____
Cafeteria _____ Initial _____
Misc. Fines _____ Initial _____
Program Fees _____ Initial _____

Registrar Checklist

_____ RTI Paperwork _____ ESOL Folder Included _____ ESE Folders Included
_____ Health Folder Included _____ Attendance in Cum Folder _____ Special Areas Notified
_____ Bio/Enrollment form in Cum Folder _____ 504 Paperwork _____ Logbook completed

Received cum folder from teacher on: _____

Sent cum folder or copies to new school on: _____

Enrolling Parent / Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Created 5/27/14

(Student's Schedule on back)

Last Updated 5/30/14

Student's Schedule

Period	Subject	Teacher / Room	W/D Grade	Teacher Signature
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
Ex	Speech / Language			

WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Old

SOUTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL
1200 37TH AVENUE EAST
BRADENTON, FL 34203
PHONE: 941-741-3366/FAX: 941-741-3372

MEMBER OF SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Student's Name

I D Number

Grade Level

Date Enrolled

Date Withdrawal

Reason for Withdrawal/WD Code

Date of Birth

New School

Street Address

City

State

Zip

IF BOOK/BOOKS ARE NOT RETURNED, WE MUST HAVE THE TITLE, NUMBER, COST AND BOOK LIST ATTACHED TO WITHDRAWAL SHEET.

BOOK RETURNED YES _____ NO _____ IF NOT, AMOUNT OWED _____

SUBJECT	TEACHER	W/D GRADE %	ITEMS TO BE RETURNED	COST	TEACHER SIGNATURE

Do you actively participate in a sport at SEHS? Yes: _____ No: _____ If yes, you must have the Athletic Director sign below.

Administrative Approval: _____ Media: _____

Attendance Office: _____ Counselor: _____

Nurse Signature: _____ Bookkeeper: _____ Amt. Due: _____

Student Signature: _____ Athletic Director: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Registrar: _____

WITHDRAWAL FORM

14-15

PALMETTO HIGH SCHOOL
1200 17TH ST. W.
PALMETTO, FL 34221
PHONE (941) 723-4848 FAX (941) 723-4952

Name 8/18/14 School ID # 12 Birth Date 9/18/14
Date Enrolled 8/18/14 Date Withdrawn 9/18/14 Grade 12 Reason for withdrawal no
Name of School no Address of School no
Special Education Student no (ESOL) English Limited Student no

TEACHERS PLEASE FILL OUT COMPLETELY

	SUBJECT	TEACHER	W/D GRADE	AMT OWED	TEACHER SIGNATURE
1	Adv Alg w/Fin App	McMillan	N/G		K
2	ANCE ENG LIT 1A5	Williams	N/G		BA Mms.
3	US Govt	Ling	N/G		22
4	DV Car Tech Prin	Ingram	0%		M. [Signature]
5	Econ Fin LIT	Marino	N/G		U
6	DV Car Tech OST	Ingram	0%		M. [Signature]
7	DV Car Tech OST	Ingram	0%		M. [Signature]

PLEASE LIST THE AMOUNT OF ANY FINES OWED

Library Text (see attached) Bookkeeper
Registrar [Signature] Student
Parent Signature [Redacted]
Parent Contact Number [Redacted]

Grading scale: 90-100 (A); 80-89 (B); 70-79 (C); 60-69 (D); 59 & below (F)
Member Southern Association of Secondary Schools
OFFICE USE ONLY: AS400 9/19 LOG 9/23 EM 9/29



STUDENT RECORDS HANDBOOK

School District of Manatee County

The Student Records Handbook is a "user's manual" for personnel
regarding student records.

2014-2015 Record Committee

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Introduction

The purpose of the Student Records Manual is to insure that all student records (automated and non-automated) will be handled in accordance with all federal and state laws, as well as district policies. It is essential to the systematic operation of the School District of Manatee County that all student records are maintained in an appropriate, consistent manner. It is the duty of each person who has a legitimate educational purpose to understand the laws, policies, and procedures for accessing, maintaining, and transferring student records.

Florida Administrative Code

- 1B-26.003 Electronic Record keeping (these rules are applicable to all agencies defined under 119.011)
- 1B-26.0021 Microfilm Standards
- 1B-24 Public Records Scheduling and Disposition

Federal Law

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Public Records

According to Section 119.011 (12), F.S., "Public records" means all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.

Per a court ruling (*Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid, and Associates*—379 So. 2d 633, FLA. 1980), a public record is *any material prepared in connection with official agency business which is intended to perpetuate, communicate, or formalize knowledge of some type*. Any document meeting this criteria is considered a public document regardless of whether it is a final copy, draft, working copy, etc. If a "draft" is sent out for review, comment, or informational purposes, the draft is public record. Documents that would not be considered public records are rough drafts (not circulated), notes to be used in preparing some other documentary material, and tapes or notes taken by a secretary as dictation. *Inter-office memoranda and intra-office memoranda communicating information from one public employee to another or merely prepared for filing, even though not a part of an agency's later, formal public product, would nonetheless constitute public records inasmuch as they supply the final evidence of knowledge obtained in connection with the transaction of business*

Education records include a range of information about a student that is maintained in schools in any recorded way, such as handwriting, print, computer media, video or audio tape, film, microfilm, and microfiche. Examples are:

- Date and place of birth, parent(s) and/or guardian addresses, and where parents can be contacted in emergencies;
- Grades, test scores, courses taken, academic specializations and activities, and official letters regarding a student's status in school;
- Special education records;
- Reports/Test Protocol from School Psychologists and/or School Social Workers
- Disciplinary records;

Disposition of Records

Per Rule 1B-24-003. (10), F.A.C., Agencies shall ensure that all destruction of records is conducted in a manner that safeguards the interests of the state and the safety, security, and privacy of individuals. In destroying records containing information that is confidential or exempt from disclosure, agencies shall employ destruction methods that prevent unauthorized access to or use of the information and ensure that the information cannot practicably be read, reconstructed, or recovered. The agency shall specify the manner of destruction of such records when documenting disposition. Where possible, recycling following destruction is encouraged.

The disposition of records will be handled in 1 of 3 ways; archive/permanent, destruction, or retain until retention period has been met.

Archive/Permanent:

Archival records are records selected for permanent preservation because they have been determined to have permanent or enduring value. Archival records are often referred to as historical Records but their value can be historical, administrative, legal, or financial.

To request materials to be scanned and/or archived, the Principal or designee should complete the Records Transmittal Form, MIS 41-00050 and submit to the Records Management Department.

Destruction:

All record destruction will be done by the Record Retention Department.

To request that materials be destroyed, the Principal or designee should complete the Records Transmittal Form (MIS 41-00050) and submit it to the Records Management Department. No student records should be destroyed at the school site.

Retained until retention period is met:

To request materials for retention or storage, the Principal or designee should complete the Records Transmittal Form (MIS 41-00050) and submit it to the Records Management Department.

For more information, contact the Records Management Department at 708-8800 ext. 1049 or see the Records Management Handbook on the Records Management Department website at:

[http://www.manateeschools.net/pages/SDMC/Departments/District_Support_Services/Proper ty Records Records Man/Records Retention](http://www.manateeschools.net/pages/SDMC/Departments/District_Support_Services/Proper%20ty%20Records%20Records%20Man/Records%20Retention)

Other:

Miscellaneous Category B information that is in care of teacher and includes student class work (consisting of non-standardized tests, term papers, homework, art work, lab projects, and other class work materials), notes from parents, field trip forms, etc. are not maintained in the cumulative folder. Teachers may keep such items in a separate file.

Discipline records (major and minor) are entered into the electronic student system. Paper copies of discipline are kept separate from the cumulative folder. The person responsible for discipline records will be determined by the principal.

Timeline of Retention

Category A: The disposition for Category A records is permanent retention. **Category A records must be submitted to Records Management for permanent retention.**

Category B: Category B records are to be stored at the school for a period of 5 years after the date of actual or intended graduation at the last school of enrollment. Most of the information contained within the cumulative folder is considered Category B. **Category B records must be submitted to Records Management for disposition when retention requirements are met.**

Other: Such "other" records as described above are submitted annually to Records Management for destruction when retention requirements are met. Paper copies of discipline records, minor offenses, are retained until the end of the school year. Major offenses are retained for three school years. If major and minor are combined, retain all for three years.

Procedure for Retention and Elimination of Category B Information from the Cumulative Folder

Most of the cumulative folder information is Category B. Per the School District of Manatee County policy, all information of a sensitive nature will be placed in a separate envelope within the Cumulative Folder, with contents listed.

A.) **ALL STUDENTS:** Retain the following Category B information for five (5) years after the date of actual or intended graduation.

- ☐ Original *Enrollment Form* - Keep all.
- ☐ Yearly update of *Biographic Information* (title of form may vary by school/level) – Keep all.
- ☐ Original *Home Language Survey (HLS)* (Note: Since 2000, the HLS is part of the enrollment form.)
- ☐ Copy of *Birth Certificate* or other document authenticating the birth date

Cumulative Student Records

Standardization of Cumulative Student Records

The maintenance and storage of student records should be consistent across the School District of Manatee County and such practices and policies should align with all state and federal laws regarding student records. The Principal has the legal responsibility for insuring that the students' records are maintained according to statute and district policy. A permanent cumulative record shall be maintained for each student from entrance into school through the twelfth grade, or its equivalent, and for students enrolled in adult education programs which lead to a high school diploma. Automated records (Category A and selected Category B information) will be maintained on the district's automated student information system. Non-automated records (Category A and B) will be maintained in the traditional permanent educational cumulative folder or as indicated by notices posted with the folders of records maintained at a separate location.

The school which initially enrolls a student is responsible for establishing an automated and non-automated permanent cumulative educational record folder for that student.

A district approved registration form will be used to secure enrollment information necessary to establish automated and non-automated student educational records. The form will be the latest version of the form adopted for use in the district.

The school initiating the student record will be responsible for verifying date of birth, health certification and immunization as prescribed by Sections 1003.21 and 1003.22, Florida Statutes.

On-Site Storage of Cumulative Student Records

State statute requires that student records be located in a secure area within the building. The construction of the records room should be designed to protect the records from human or natural disaster. When a fireproof room is not available, fireproof filing cabinets can be used as a measure to protect student records. If a vaulted room is available, such space should be used for the storage of student records. It is imperative that student records are kept secure when not in use. Cumulative folders that have been checked out must be in a locked filing cabinet when not being viewed. Cumulative folders should not be out of the records room for prolonged periods of time and should be returned as soon as the necessary information has been obtained.

The Registrar is responsible for receiving and maintaining cumulative student records. Any issues or concerns regarding misuse or missing cumulative student records should be communicated to the Principal immediately. All requests to view or remove files from the records room should be processed through the Registrar. When cumulative student records

Assessments: Standardized Test results (– e.g., FCAT, SAT, ACT, Stanford, EOC, etc.) that are sent to the schools are duplicates. Per Record Schedule #GS7, Item #124, the assessment results will be retained until posted to the electronic records. The district's Office of Assessment and Research recommends keeping the paper copy for 2 years. The electronic scores are now the permanent record. It will no longer be required to file these into the Cumulative folder. Retain the boxes containing the scores for 2 years and then submit a Records Transmittal Form, MIS 41-00050, for proper destruction through The Records Management department.

Health Records: Health records, including Immunization records, are a part of the cumulative student records. The Annual Student Medical/Health Information card that is used to track clinic visits and contains parent contact information and other health information are a part of the cumulative student record. This ~~may~~ should be kept in the clinic along with nurse's notes in the DH3041 Health Folder while the student is enrolled. These should be filed into the cumulative folder when the student matriculates or withdraws.

Tracking of Cumulative Student Records

Check In-Out Procedures

Cumulative folders contain confidential information and are subject to all FERPA laws. They may only be viewed by employees who have an educational purpose for accessing the student's information. Cumulative folders must be stored in a fireproof, locked area. While checked out, the cumulative folders must be kept in a locked cabinet/drawer. No cumulative student records may be removed from the records storage area by anyone without following the procedures listed below.

Check-out Procedure:

The staff member checking out the file must complete the check-out section of the *Cumulative folder Log* (kept in the cumulative folder storage area).

After removing the file from the filing cabinet, replace it with a *Cumulative Folder Place card*.

Check-in Procedures:

When returning the cumulative folder, complete the check-in section of the *Cumulative Folder Log*. Replace the folder in the filing cabinet and remove the *Cumulative folder Place card*.

return trip. You will need to contact the Coordinator of Guidance Services 751-6550 ext. 2258 to make arrangements for your folders to be moved.

Other useful information:

- You will be asked to provide the name of a contact person at your school.
- The schools will need to provide the boxes, large envelopes and clear tape. Having a tape dispenser helps considerably; hopefully your school will have one. The boxes need lids so they can be taped down and kept secure. A tip: the boxes that reams of paper come are good to use but any kind would be fine. The boxes get heavy, so the smaller ones work best.
- The Coordinator of Guidance Services will provide each school's registrar with an original copy of the color-coded mailing sheets to be placed on the top of each package (see attached). Make copies of the original as follows: elementary-pink, middle-green. These color-coded mailing sheets will have a place for the name of the sending school and the receiving school. These color-coded mailing sheets must be used to differentiate elementary packages from middle school packages. There will also be a place to note the number of the package in the series of packages that will be picked up (i.e. 1 of 4, 2 of 4, 3 of 4, etc.).
- All cumulative folders packages must be ready on the PM of the specified date for pick up by staff from Central Distribution. The Student Services Secretary, will do the work order to Central Distribution for pick up from all district schools starting on the specified date. Cumulative folders will be delivered to the receiving schools within 5 days of pick up.
- When the cumulative folders arrive at the schools, the registrars will record their arrival and disseminate the colored coded files ASAP to the appropriate staff.
- Retain all cum folders for DNEs at the receiving school until a records request is made from another school or until after the 10-day count. If the cum folder for a student is missing, check the enrollment screen to determine the last assigned school. Request folder to be sent via courier mail by emailing the registrar. This email will serve as documentation of the folder transfer. After the 10-day count, return all non-enrolled student records to the last school of attendance.
- All purged records must be sent to the records warehouse for shredding. Please complete a Records Transmittal Form, MIS 41-00050, to start this process. Contact the Records Management Department at 708-8800 ext. 1049 with any questions.

related to their contract. Any copies must be maintained under locked files, must not be shared with others without parental consent and must be destroyed at contract termination.

- All contracted staff must sign a Confidentiality Statement prior to working with students and their records.
- Practicum students and interns preparing for careers as teachers, school psychologist, school social workers, guidance counselors, occupational therapists and speech therapists, routinely serve in school situations in which access to records is necessary. Such individuals do have access to their own students' records.
 - All practicum students and interns must sign a Confidentiality Statement prior to working with students and their records.
- Schools or institutions of post-secondary education in which a student seeks or intends to enroll;
- Federal, state, and local authorities involving and audit or evaluation of compliance with education program requirements;
- Institutions in connection with post-secondary financial aid, such as a college loan;
- Organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of education institutions;
- Parents of dependent students as defined by the IRS code;
- Accrediting organizations;
- Persons complying with a judicial order of subpoena;
- Health and safety emergency personnel;
- Use as directory information
- The parent of a student is not an eligible student or the student;
- State or local officials in connection with serving the student under the juvenile justice system in accordance with an interagency agreement as required by Section 228.093, FS;
- Parties involved in legal action initiated by the district against the parent or by the parent against the district. In such circumstances, the school district may disclose to the courts, without court order or subpoena, the education records of the student that are relevant for the school district to proceed with legal action as the plaintiff or to defend itself.

Procedures for amending education records

If parents believe their student's education records contain inaccurate or misleading information or violates the privacy or other rights of the child, they may request that the district amend the records.

The following steps should be taken to amend education records:

- The parents should identify, in writing to the school, the portion of the record believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or a violation of the privacy of the rights of the student.
Note: if the record in question is a report from a district school psychologist, school social worker, behavior specialist, SLP, OT, PT, or other district evaluator, the school will notify

who will be receiving the records by contacting them or, if records are being picked up, by picture ID. If the transcript is being picked up by someone other than the student, the request must identify the recipient and be notarized or witnessed by a School District of Manatee County employee. The recipient must provide picture ID. Transcript information will be sent using the FASTER system whenever possible.

Florida statute requires schools to provide copies of student records to the parent, guardian, or the student upon request. Schools are also required to send copies to educational institutions, per parent request. The original cumulative student record must be retained by the School District of Manatee County.

A request to view student records at the school site must be made in advance and an appointed time should be set. The records will need to be redacted for personal identifying information and information regarding other students. The registrar should remain with the person viewing the records at all times. No documents may be removed from the Cumulative Student Record.

Registrars should maintain a list of all sent records. Include the date of the request, the student's name, the receiving entity, and the date that the records were sent. If a registrar sends a Cumulative Student Record to another school within the district via the district courier service, email the receiving schools' registrar. This email should be kept as documentation.

Annual Public Notification

Each school must provide to parents and adult/eligible students annual written notification of their rights to inspect and review student educational records. The notification should be provided at the beginning of the school year and to all new/transfer students. The document must be in the language of the parent or adult/eligible student.

The annual public notification may take the form of a separate document or may be incorporated into other documents annually distributed to parents/students (registration packets, planners, school folders, newsletter). Whatever form the document takes, school principals must ensure that it is received by parents and adult/eligible students on an annual basis at the beginning of the year or when the student transfers into their school.

Regardless of the form and style of the notification, the following points must be included in the "Public Notice:"

- Right of access, right of waiver of access, right to challenge and hearing, and the right of privacy.
- Notice of the location and availability of the district's School Board policy on education records of students.
- A statement of the categories of information designated as "directory information." In this regard, notification must also be made that the parent or adult/eligible student will be given fifteen (15) days, from the date of receipt, to inform the school,

- A playbill, showing a student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which is information generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent.

Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. If parents do not want the School District to disclose directory information from their child's education records without prior written consent, they must notify the District in writing by September 15 of each year or within 30 days of receiving this annual notice. The School District has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph, video, film or other likeness
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of athletic team members
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- The most recent school attended

NOTE: Objecting to the release of directory information may result in your name, photograph and other directory information being excluded from yearbooks, sports programs, and other school publications. Both parents have a right to see the school records of their child unless there is a certified copy of a court order on file at the school that specifically denies the right to access school records. Copies of school records are available for minimal copying charge. If you have any questions about these rights, please contact your school office.

Military Opt-Out Procedures

Under federal law, military recruiters are entitled, upon request, to a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of high school students unless you object to such release. **You or your parents must notify your principal in writing if you do not want your name, address and telephone number released**

Miscellaneous Information

Q and A:

- ***When DCF/MSO investigators access student records, what is the procedure?***

During a child abuse investigation, the DCF/MSO investigators are permitted access to information in student records and need only sign the Educational Records Review Log that is on the back side of the current cumulative folder or a separate insert.

- ***When DCF/MSO takes the child into custody, how is this documented?***

The agreement referenced above indicates "using the sign-out form maintained in the school office". However, do not use a "sign out book" available to the public or otherwise indicate who the investigator is visiting (e.g. writing the child's name on a photocopy of the investigator's ID).

- ***When DCF/MSO takes the child into custody, who communicates with the parent?***

School staff do not call the parents in that this may compromise the investigation. It is the responsibility of DCF/MSO to interview the parents and notify the parents as part of their investigation.

Cc: Dr. Greene
Cynthia Saunders
Judy Laurent
Annette Codelia
Wylene Herring-Cayasso
Shirley Hurley
Kim Burnham

Category Records Classification

Automated and non-automated student educational record information shall be classified as follows:

CATEGORY A information is verified information of clear educational importance which shall be retained indefinitely. Category A information consists of but is not limited to:

- Pupil's or student's full legal name
- Authenticated birth date, place of birth, race and sex
- Last known address of the pupil or student
- Names of the pupil's or student's parents or guardian
- Name and location of school(s) attended; dates of school attendance
- Number of days present and absent; date(s) enrolled, date(s) withdrawn; entrance and withdrawal codes
- Courses taken and record of achievement, such as grades, credits, or certification of program completion
- Date of graduation or date of program completion (including statement of standard or special diploma or certificate of completion issuance)
- State and/or district standardized assessment/achievement test results, if the test results are required for graduation (e.g., SSAT, HSCT, FCAT, FSA, PERT, ACT, SAT)
- Written records of access, access logs
- Home Language Survey*

CATEGORY B information is verified information of clear educational importance which will be periodically eliminated as prescribed by Florida Statute 1001.52(3). Category B information may include but is not limited to:

- Health information, including immunization records
- Family background data
- Standardized test scores
- Educational and career plans
- Honors and activities
- Work experience reports
- Teacher comments
- Reports of student services or exceptional student staffing committees including all information required for audit purposes
- Correspondence from community agencies or private professionals
- Driver education certificate
- Written agreements of corrections, deletions or expulsions as a result of meetings or hearings to amend educational records
- Written requests to waive access to confidential letters
- Written requests to restrict the release of directory information*
- Divorce and/or custody documents including court orders*
- Records of "major" student discipline actions; suspension and expulsion records*
- Student LEP Plans*

SECTION 7

MANATEE COUNTY SCHOOL
DISTRICT
ATTENDANCE HANDBOOK

Florida Compulsory School Law (F.S. 1003.21) states all children who are either six years of age (or who will be six years old by February 1 of any school year), but who have not attained the age of 16 must attend school regularly during the entire school term. Students between 16 and 18 are also within compulsory attendance age, unless a formal Declaration of Intent to Terminate School Enrollment has been completed and signed by the parent.

Attendance Expectation – To be on time and in school for the entire student day, each school day.

Outcomes – Daily attendance, maximum instructional time, increased opportunity to learn, increased opportunity for academic success, increased opportunity for positive social engagement

The school-site *Attendance Office* will be responsible for all attendance data-entry, attendance letters, and referrals to appropriate school-based staff in instances of excessive excused and/or unexcused absence.

Excused Absences

Q: What is an excused absence?

A: An absence can be excused for the following reasons:

- a. You are ill or injured.
- b. Major illness in your immediate family (this means parents, brothers, sisters, Grandparents, or others living in the home or who are close relatives).
- c. Death in your immediate family.
- d. Religious instruction in your faith. This requires a note from your parent before the absence.
- e. Subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency. A copy of the subpoena or summons must be given to the principal or designee. This includes detention at a juvenile center in which you continue your education.
- f. A major disaster as decided by the administration.
- g. Any absences, including those for field trips, participation in another academic class or program, or other parental requests as judged appropriate by the principal, provided the request is submitted to the principal forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the absence. A principal may waive the requirement for advance notice if extenuating circumstances exist.
- h. A documented appointment with a doctor or dentist.
- i. An occurrence of head lice, with a maximum of two excused days.
- j. Other advance notice absences (principal approved)
- k. Insurmountable conditions (principal approved)

For absences to be excused

Parent note and/or call; medical documentation; obituary or funeral program; court/legal-system documentation; documentation of religious instruction/observance

Excessive Excused Absences

More than 9 parent/guardian excused absences

Interventions

School sends letter/contacts family requesting doctor's notes for additional absences to be excused

Research possible Hospital Homebound or other alternative placement

Suspension of Driving Privilege

If information in the FOCUS student-information-system indicates that a student has accrued 15 or more unexcused absences in a 90-calendar day period, or the student has been issued a Drop-Out-Code (DNE; W05; W13; W15; W18; W21; W22; or W23), a FOCUS-based report (State DMV Report) will capture that name.

The list of names captured via that report will be electronically transmitted to the DHSMV on a weekly basis.

Notification to the DHSMV initiates one of two actions:

The DHSMV will post a Notice of Intent to Suspend driving privileges to the driver record of all reported **licensed students**. These students may lose their driver's license unless they comply with attendance requirements or;

The DHSMV will post an education noncompliance entry, to the record created for this specific purpose, for all reported **unlicensed students**, and they may not apply for a driver's license until relevant attendance requirements are satisfied.

Once a student's name has been submitted to the DMV, said student/family have the right to request a *Hardship Waiver Hearing* at the student's school. The request must be made within 15 days of the date on the *Notice of Intent to Suspend*. Per the state guidelines, the school must conduct such a hearing if requested. If the student/family disagree with the school's ruling, they may appeal the decision to the local School Board.

Students who have lost the privilege must subsequently accumulate 30 consecutive SCHOOL days with no unexcused absences in order to receive a Reinstatement of Driving Privilege form. If you need further information regarding this issue, please contact the District Truancy Office at 751-6550, extension 2091.

Withdrawing Students

- If a parent/guardian (P/G) informs your school of a withdrawal to move out of county, state, or country issue the *W3A* or *W3B* immediately.
- If a P/G informs your school of a withdrawal to move within the county, do not withdraw until requested to do so by the SDMC receiving school. The one exception to this is SDMC Horizons placements.
- If a P/G informs your school of a withdrawal to pursue *home-schooling*, they must sign a *Letter of Intent to Home School* (LI), which the school immediately forwards to the *Office of Student Assignment*, before the *W24* is issued.

Excessive Consecutive Excused and/or Mixed Absences

W18 (withdrawn for medical reasons)

- If a P/G informs your school of a withdrawal due to physical/mental health issues, and presents valid supporting documentation:
 - a).** Refer the case to appropriate site-staff to pursue a *Hospital Homebound* (HHB) placement;
 - b).** If HHB is not feasible (or denied), yet confirmed, valid documentation specifically calls for absence of 15 school-days or more, issue the *W18*.

Excessive Consecutive Unexcused/Unexplained Absences

*Before a student is withdrawn due to excessive, consecutive-days of **unexcused/unexplained absence**, there must be documented, physical contact, at which time the student in question is **actually seen and spoken to!** This must happen immediately before the withdrawal. **This will usually require a home-visit.***

W22 (withdrawn as whereabouts unknown)

- If the student in question has not been seen nor spoken to, all required steps have been completed (documented phone calls, letters, and home-visit/attempted home-visit), and the family cannot be located, issue the *W22*, along with proper documentation in FOCUS, upon the 15th (or greater) consecutive absence.
- If the student in question has not been seen nor spoken to, all required steps have been completed (documented phone calls, letters, home-visit/attempted home-visit), and the family is located but does not produce the child, immediately forward the name(s) to the TCSW for further investigation. The TCSW will inform you of when to withdraw the student, and which code to use. **Remember – if you have concerns re: a child's well-being, based on actual events and/or evidence, always call the Florida Abuse Registry (1-800-962-2873)**
- If a P/G submits a valid *runaway case number* immediately issue the *W22* (whereabouts unknown), along with proper documentation in FOCUS.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is an excused absence? Please refer to **Excused Absences** on page 2.

Q: How many excused absences can I have? **A:** You are allowed nine excused absences. Your parent may excuse nine absences per year. When you have reached your limit, official documentation/confirmation is then required for every additional absence.

Q: What if I have used all of my excused absences and a family emergency occurs? **A:** You must provide appropriate documentation/confirmation to the school principal or designee for approval. These will be recorded as excused absences.

Q: How can I make up work when I am absent? **A:** After an excused absence, you must arrange with your teacher for any make-up work. You have the same number of days you were absent to make up your work. This rule does not apply to some long term assignments. (A long term assignment is when a student has 10 or more days to complete the work.) These long term assignments will be due on the specified date unless excused in writing by the teacher or principal. It is your responsibility to make these arrangements and to submit the make-up work within the deadlines set by the teacher(s). You do not have the right to make up work if your absence was unexcused.

Q: I am going to be absent for semester exams. May I take my exams early? **A:** Semester exams may not be given early. You may take your semester exams upon your return to school.

Q: What is an unexcused absence? Please refer to **Unexcused Absences** on page 3.

Q: How many unexcused absences can I have? **A:** In Manatee County, state law requires the regular attendance of children between the ages of 6 and 16 and makes parents and legal guardians legally responsible for seeing that their children attend school. Fifteen unexcused absences in a 90 day period may result in a referral for truancy court action. Family vacations during scheduled school time are considered unexcused absences.

Q: What happens if I am late for school? **A:** If you arrive at school late for any reason, you must report to the office and receive a tardy admit slip. The tardy will be deemed as excused or unexcused. You are expected to be in school at the start of the school day, every day.

Q: What is an excused tardy? **A:** An excused tardy is when you are late for school due to sickness, injury, death in your family, medical or dental appointments with a note from the physician, school sponsored activities, court date, or other reason approved by the school principal. For elementary students, parents must accompany the student to the office when they are tardy.

Q: What is an unexcused tardy? **A:** An unexcused tardy is when you are late to school due to, but not limited to, oversleeping, missing the school bus, shopping trips, pleasure trips, or excessive tardiness due to illness without a physician's verification that the medical condition justifies your tardiness. If an elementary student arrives late and comes into the office unaccompanied by an adult, he or she will receive an unexcused tardy.

Q: How many times am I allowed an unexcused tardy? **A:** Numerous tardies are unfair to the other students whose instruction is interrupted each time a student arrives late. Individual schools may develop school-based consequences for unexcused tardies.

Q: May I leave school early in the school day? **A:** You are expected to be in school for the full day. However, if you must leave school early, you must go to the office and receive permission for early release. Parents of elementary and middle school students must report to the office to pick up their child. Parents of elementary and middle school students must report to the office to pick up their child. High school students aged 16 or older may sign themselves out early with parent permission, following the school sign-out procedures. You cannot leave your school campus for lunch or other unexcused personal reasons at any point during the school day.

Appendix

Withdrawal Codes

DNE	Any KG-12 student who was expected to attend a school but did not enter as expected for unknown reasons and required documented efforts to locate the student are maintained per s. 1003.26, Florida Statutes.	W07	Any student who graduated from school with a special diploma based on option one - as referenced in State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.09961.
W01	Any PK-12 student promoted, retained or transferred to another attendance reporting unit in the same school.	W08	Any student who received a (24-credit option) certificate of completion. The student met the minimum credits and local requirements, but did not pass the state approved graduation test or a concordant and/or comparative score, and/or did not achieve the required GPA.
W02	Any PK-12 student promoted, retained or transferred to another school in the same district.	W8A	Any student who met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma (24-credit option) except passing the State approved graduation test and received a certificate of completion and is eligible to take the common placement test and be admitted to developmental education or credit courses at a state community college as appropriate.
W3A	Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a public school in another district in Florida.	W8B	Any student who received a certificate of completion. The student met the minimum credits, but did not pass the state approved graduation test or a concordant and/or comparative score, and/or did not achieve the required GPA.
W3B	Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend another public school out-of-state or out-of-country.	W09	Any student who received a special certificate of completion, is properly classified as an eligible exceptional education student, met applicable local requirements, and was unable to meet appropriate special state minimum requirements.
W04	Any PK-12 student who withdraws to attend a nonpublic school in- or out-of-state or out-of-country.		
W05	Any student age 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intention of returning and has filed a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment per s. 1003.21, Florida Statutes.		
W06	Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma.		

WGA	Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements, passed the Performance-Based Exit Option Tests, satisfied the state approved graduation test requirement through a concordant and/or comparative score, and was awarded a State of Florida High School Performance-Based Diploma.	WXW	Any student with disabilities who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma based on the Academically Challenging Curriculum to enhance Learning (ACCEL) options, F.S. 1002.3105(5) and satisfied the state graduation test requirement with an approved statewide <u>assessment waiver</u> .
WGD	Any student who completed the Performance-Based Exit Option Model Program requirements and passed the Performance-Based Exit Option Tests, but did not pass the state approved graduation test and was awarded a State of Florida diploma.		
WPO	Any student who is withdrawn from school without receiving a standard diploma and subsequent to receiving a W07, W08, W8A, W8B, W09, or W27 during the student's year of high school completion.		
WRW	Any student with disabilities who graduated from school with a standard diploma and a Statewide Standardized Assessment Results Waiver.		
WXL	Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma based on the Academically Challenging Curriculum to enhance Learning (ACCEL) options, F.S. 1002.3105(5).		
WXT	Any student who graduated from school and met all of the requirements to receive a standard diploma based on the Academically Challenging Curriculum to enhance Learning (ACCEL) options, F.S. 1002.3105(5) and satisfied the state graduation test requirement through an approved <u>state concordant and/or comparative</u> score.		

(10-Day-Letter)

Date:

To the parent/guardian of *John Doe*:

Your school's name attendance records indicate that *John* has had 10 unexcused, unexplained absences during the last 90-calendar-days.

Please, contact *your school's name* attendance office as soon as possible to make any needed corrections to the record, and/or to discuss any issues which may be affecting *John's* attendance. Failure to make any needed corrections, or inform the school of any relevant circumstances, could result in *John's* name being sent to the District Truancy Office for further consideration.

Your school's name staff is here to help you and *John* make the most of his/her public school experience.

Remember, *John's* education is so very important to his/her future, and every day counts!

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Principal

Your School

(Parent-9-Days-Excused-Letter)

Date:

To the parent/guardian of *John Doe*:

Your school's name attendance records indicate that *John* has now had nine (9) parent/guardian excused absences.

School district policy limits the number of parent/guardian excused absences to nine (9).

From this point on any days absent can only be excused with third-party documentation explaining the absence (doctor note, dentist note, therapist note, paperwork from court and/or other legal proceedings, etc.).

Please, contact *your school's name* attendance office for more information, and/or to discuss any circumstance that may be affecting *John's* attendance.

Your school's name staff is here to help you and *John* make the most of his/her public school experience.

Remember, *John's* education is so very important to his/her future, and every day counts!

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Principal

Your School

PART II
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

1003.21 School attendance.

1003.22 School-entry health examinations; immunization against communicable diseases; exemptions; duties of Department of Health.

1003.23 Attendance records and reports.

1003.24 Parents responsible for attendance of children; attendance policy.

1003.25 Procedures for maintenance and transfer of student records.

1003.26 Enforcement of school attendance.

1003.27 Court procedure and penalties.

1003.28 Continuation of truancy remedial activities upon transfer of student; retention of legal jurisdiction.

1003.29 Notice to schools of court action.

1003.21 School attendance.—

(1)(a)1. All children who have attained the age of 6 years or who will have attained the age of 6 years by February 1 of any school year or who are older than 6 years of age but who have not attained the age of 16 years, except as otherwise provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term.

2. Children who will have attained the age of 5 years on or before September 1 of the school year are eligible for admission to public kindergartens during that school year under rules adopted by the district school board.

(b) Any child who has attained the age of 6 years on or before September 1 of the school year and who has been enrolled in a public school or who has attained the age of 6 years on or before September 1 and has satisfactorily completed the requirements for kindergarten in a private school from which the district school board accepts transfer of academic credit, or who otherwise meets the criteria for admission or transfer in a manner similar to that applicable to other grades, shall progress according to the district's student progression plan. However, nothing in this section shall authorize the state or any school district to oversee or exercise control over the curricula or academic programs of private schools or home education programs.

(c) A student who attains the age of 16 years during the school year is not subject to compulsory school attendance beyond the date upon which he or she attains that age if the student files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the district school board. Public school students who have attained the age of 16 years and who have not graduated are subject to compulsory school attendance until the formal declaration of intent is filed with the district school board. The declaration must acknowledge that terminating school enrollment is likely to reduce the student's earning potential and must be signed by the student and student's parent. The school district shall notify the student's parent of receipt of the student's declaration

(3) The district school superintendent may authorize certificates of exemptions from school attendance requirements in certain situations. Students within the compulsory attendance age limits who hold valid certificates of exemption that have been issued by the superintendent shall be exempt from attending school. A certificate of exemption shall cease to be valid at the end of the school year in which it is issued.

1003.23 Attendance records and reports.—

(1) The attendance of all public K-12 school students shall be checked each school day in the manner prescribed by rules of the State Board of Education and recorded in the teacher's register or by some approved system of recording attendance. Students may be counted in attendance only if they are actually present at school or are away from school on a school day and are engaged in an educational activity which constitutes a part of the school-approved instructional program for the student.

(2) All officials, teachers, and other employees in public, parochial, religious, denominational, and private K-12 schools, including private tutors, shall keep all records and shall prepare and submit promptly all reports that may be required by law and by rules of the State Board of Education and district school boards. Such records shall include a register of enrollment and attendance and all persons described above shall make these reports therefrom as may be required by the State Board of Education. The enrollment register shall show the absence or attendance of each student enrolled for each school day of the year in a manner prescribed by the State Board of Education. The register shall be open for the inspection by the designated school representative or the district school superintendent of the district in which the school is located. Violation of the provisions of this section shall be a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided by law. This section shall not apply to home education programs provided in s. 1002.41.

History.—s. 118, ch. 2002-387.

1003.24 Parents responsible for attendance of children; attendance policy.—Each parent of a child within the compulsory attendance age is responsible for the child's school attendance as required by law. The absence of a student from school is prima facie evidence of a violation of this section; however, criminal prosecution under this chapter may not be brought against a parent until the provisions of s. 1003.26 have been complied with. A parent of a student is not responsible for the student's nonattendance at school under any of the following conditions:

(1) **WITH PERMISSION.**—The absence was with permission of the head of the school;

(2) **WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE.**—The absence was without the parent's knowledge, consent, or connivance, in which case the student shall be dealt with as a dependent child;

(3) **FINANCIAL INABILITY.**—The parent was unable financially to provide necessary clothes for the student, which inability was reported in writing to the superintendent prior to the opening of school or immediately after the beginning of such inability, provided that the validity of any claim

the case of an unexcused absence from school, or an absence from school for which the reason is unknown, to prevent the development of patterns of nonattendance. The Legislature finds that early intervention in school attendance is the most effective way of producing good attendance habits that will lead to improved student learning and achievement. Each public school shall implement the following steps to promote and enforce regular school attendance:

(1) CONTACT, REFER, AND ENFORCE.—

(a) Upon each unexcused absence, or absence for which the reason is unknown, the school principal or his or her designee shall contact the student's parent to determine the reason for the absence. If the absence is an excused absence, as defined by district school board policy, the school shall provide opportunities for the student to make up assigned work and not receive an academic penalty unless the work is not made up within a reasonable time.

(b) If a student has had at least five unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a 90-calendar-day period, the student's primary teacher shall report to the school principal or his or her designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal shall, unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the school's child study team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. If the child study team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential remedies, and the principal shall notify the district school superintendent and the school district contact for home education programs that the referred student is exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance.

(c) If an initial meeting does not resolve the problem, the child study team shall implement the following:

1. Frequent attempts at communication between the teacher and the family.
2. Evaluation for alternative education programs.
3. Attendance contracts.

The child study team may, but is not required to, implement other interventions, including referral to other agencies for family services or recommendation for filing a truancy petition pursuant to s. 984.151.

(d) The child study team shall be diligent in facilitating intervention services and shall report the case to the district school superintendent only when all reasonable efforts to resolve the nonattendance behavior are exhausted.

(e) If the parent refuses to participate in the remedial strategies because he or she believes that those strategies are unnecessary or inappropriate, the parent may appeal to the district school board. The district school board may provide a hearing officer, and the hearing officer shall make a recommendation for final action to the district school board. If the district school board's final

for a student's nonenrollment in school. If the notice and requirement are ignored, the designated school representative shall report the case to the district school superintendent, and may refer the case to the case staffing committee, established pursuant to s. 984.12. The district school superintendent shall take such steps as are necessary to bring criminal prosecution against the parent.

(b) Subsequent to the activities required under subsection (1), the district school superintendent or his or her designee shall give written notice in person or by return-receipt mail to the parent that criminal prosecution is being sought for nonattendance. The district school superintendent may file a truancy petition, as defined in s. 984.03, following the procedures outlined in s. 984.151.

(3) RETURN STUDENT TO PARENT.—A designated school representative may visit the home or place of residence of a student and any other place in which he or she is likely to find any student who is required to attend school when the student is not enrolled or is absent from school during school hours without an excuse, and, when the student is found, shall return the student to his or her parent or to the principal or teacher in charge of the school, or to the private tutor from whom absent, or to the juvenile assessment center or other location established by the district school board to receive students who are absent from school. Upon receipt of the student, the parent shall be immediately notified.

(4) REPORT TO APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY.—A designated school representative shall report to the appropriate authority designated by law to receive such notices, all violations of the Child Labor Law that may come to his or her knowledge.

(5) RIGHT TO INSPECT.—A designated school representative shall have the right of access to, and inspection of, establishments where minors may be employed or detained only for the purpose of ascertaining whether students of compulsory school age are actually employed there and are actually working there regularly. The designated school representative shall, if he or she finds unsatisfactory working conditions or violations of the Child Labor Law, report his or her findings to the appropriate authority.

History.—s. 121, ch. 2002-387; s. 5, ch. 2006-301.

1003.27 Court procedure and penalties.—The court procedure and penalties for the enforcement of the provisions of this part, relating to compulsory school attendance, shall be as follows:

(1) COURT JURISDICTION.—The circuit court has original and exclusive jurisdiction of all proceedings against, or prosecutions of, students under the provisions of this part. Proceedings against, or prosecutions of, parents or employers as provided by this section shall be in the court of each county having jurisdiction of misdemeanors wherein trial by jury is afforded the defendant.

(2) NONENROLLMENT AND NONATTENDANCE CASES.—

Families or the district administrator's designee, and the district school superintendent or the superintendent's designee must develop a cooperative interagency agreement that:

- (a) Clearly defines each department's role, responsibility, and function in working with habitual truants and their families.

- (b) Identifies and implements measures to resolve and reduce truant behavior.

- (c) Addresses issues of streamlining service delivery, the appropriateness of legal intervention, case management, the role and responsibility of the case staffing committee, student and parental intervention and involvement, and community action plans.

- (d) Delineates timeframes for implementation and identifies a mechanism for reporting results by the circuit juvenile justice manager or the circuit manager's designee and the district school superintendent or the superintendent's designee to the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Education and other governmental entities as needed.

- (e) Designates which agency is responsible for each of the intervention steps in this section, to yield more effective and efficient intervention services.

(5) ATTENDANCE REGISTER AS EVIDENCE.—The register of attendance of students at a public, parochial, religious, denominational, or private school, or of students taught by a private tutor, kept in compliance with rules of the State Board of Education is prima facie evidence of the facts which it is required to show. A certified copy of any rule and a statement of the date of its adoption by the State Board of Education is admissible as prima facie evidence of the provisions of the rule and of the date of its adoption.

(6) PROCEEDINGS AND PROSECUTIONS; WHO MAY BEGIN.—Proceedings or prosecutions under this chapter may be commenced by the district school superintendent, by a designated school representative, by the probation officer of the county, by the executive officer of any court of competent jurisdiction, by an officer of any court of competent jurisdiction, or by a duly authorized agent of the Department of Education or the Department of Juvenile Justice. If a proceeding has been commenced against both a parent and a child pursuant to this chapter, the presiding courts shall make every effort to coordinate sanctions against the child and parent, including ordering the child and parent to perform community service hours or attend counseling together.

(7) PENALTIES.—The penalties for refusing or failing to comply with this chapter shall be as follows:

- (a) *The parent.*—

1. A parent who refuses or fails to have a minor student who is under his or her control attend school regularly, or who refuses or fails to comply with the requirements in subsection (3), commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

2. The continued or habitual absence of a minor student without the consent of the principal or teacher in charge of the school he or she attends or should attend, or of the tutor who instructs or

(1) If, during the activities designed to remedy truant behavior as described in s. 1003.27, the parent of the student who is the subject of such activities transfers the student to another school district in this state in an attempt to circumvent the remedial procedures which have already begun, the administration of the school from which the student transferred shall provide to the administration of the new school, at no charge, copies of all available records and documents relevant to such remedial activities, and the administration of the new school shall begin remedial activities in the program that most closely meets the transfer student's needs.

(2) In the event that a legal proceeding has commenced, as provided in s. 1003.27, against a student who has been determined to be a habitual truant, the movement of the student who is the subject of such proceeding to another circuit court district in this state will not affect the jurisdiction of the court to proceed with the case under the law.

History.—s. 123, ch. 2002-387.

1003.29 Notice to schools of court action.—If a court takes action that directly involves a student's school, including, but not limited to, an order that a student attend school, attend school with his or her parent, perform at grade level, or perform community service hours at the school, the office of the clerk of the court shall provide notice to the school of the court's action.

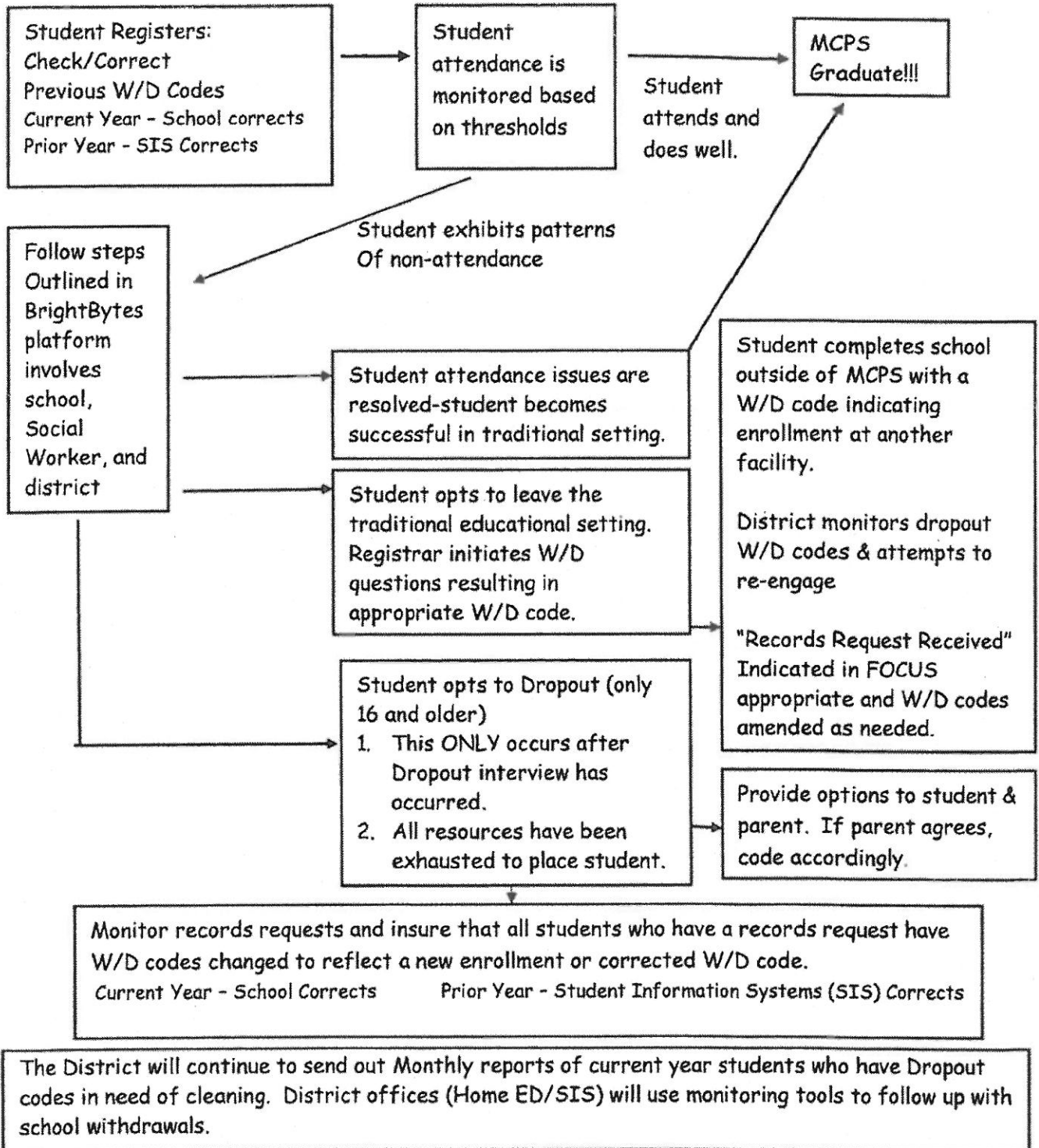
History.—s. 124, ch. 2002-387.

SECTION 8

Dropout Prevention Guidelines

Purpose: This document will articulate all of the processes that should be followed by schools and district personnel to continue to improve the dropout/graduation rate for Manatee County Public Schools (MCPS).

Dropout Flow Chart



- I. Registrar Responsibilities
- II. Guidance Counselor Responsibilities
- III. Attendance Responsibilities
- IV. District Responsibilities

I. Registrar Responsibilities

Since the Registrar is the point of contact for all students entering and leaving a school, the role of this position is vital in maintaining the most accurate enrollment and withdrawal coding for the district.

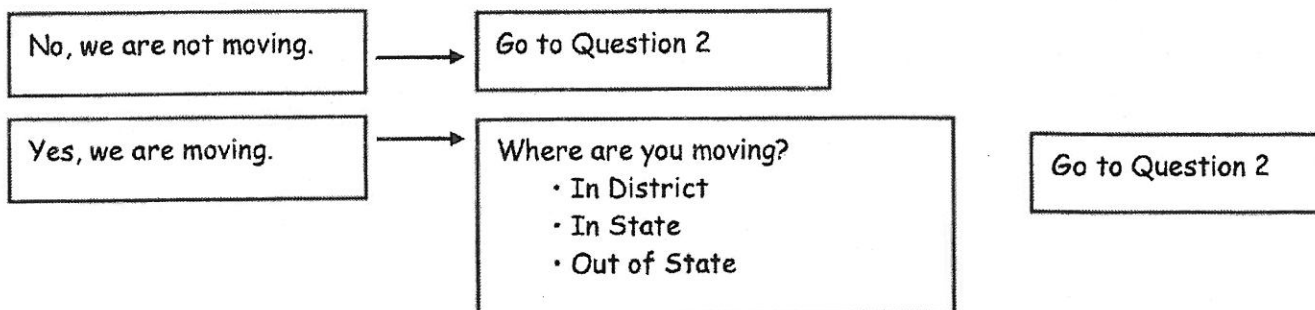
- A. When enrolling students, take a moment and look at the W/D codes that are in place for that student. If you see any of the following codes, take action to correct the code because you have the opportunity to determine where the student has been. If the code is during the current school year, the school may make the change. *If it is for the prior year, Student Information Systems (SIS) Department must make the change in the amendment system.*

Code	Definition
DNE	Did Not Enter
W05	Any student age 16 or older who leaves school voluntarily with no intent of returning
W13	Any K-12 student withdrawn from school due to court action
W15	Any K-12 student who is withdrawn from school due to nonattendance
W18	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to medical reasons
W21	Any K-12 student who is W/D from school due to being expelled - Never coded by the school - by MIS ONLY
W22	Any K-12 student whose whereabouts is unknown.

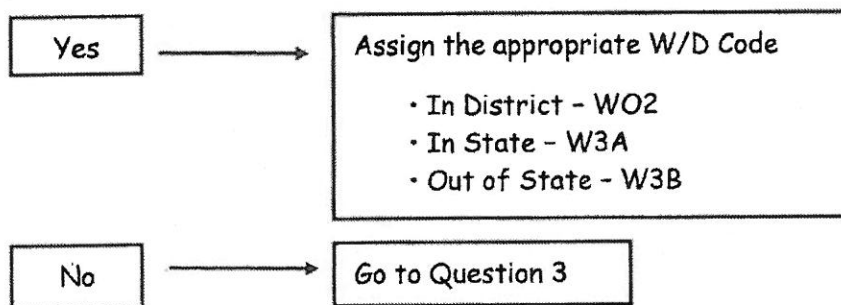
- B. State Statute requires "Parental Confirmation" when determining the correct W/D code to use for students leaving a school. If a student comes in and states they are going to W/D, the student must conference with a Guidance Counselor or School Administrator.

If a parent or legal guardian calls or comes in to W/D the student, the following questions should be asked:

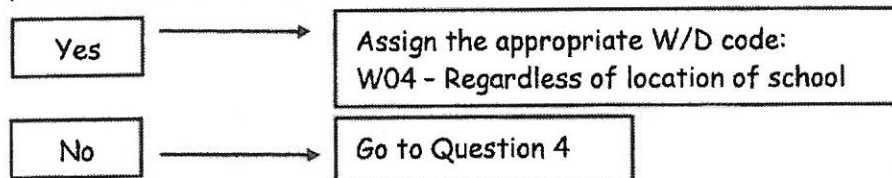
1. Are you moving?



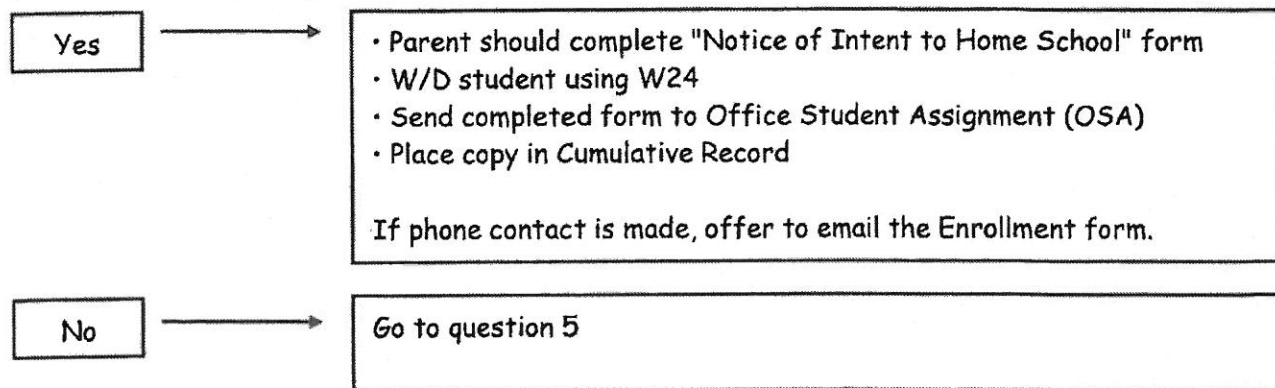
2. Will your child be attending a public school?



3. Will your child be attending a private school?



4. Will your child be completing work via the internet (Florida Virtual, e-Tech, Other) or from Home?



5. Will your child be enrolled in the Life Program?

Yes

Explain Life Program

1. Manatee Technical College (MTC)
 - . Would do academics and work on a vocation certification
 - . No major discipline or attendance issues
2. Horizons Academy
 - . Student would be dual enrolled
 - . Work on academics one day, On the Job Training (OJT) the next, student must be enrolled full time
 - . If student is making progress, a review can be done to allow extended semester (up to two) to get diploma, if not, student can be counseled for GED program

II. Guidance Counselor (GC) Responsibilities

A. Student who exhibits a pattern of non-attendance:

Once these students have been identified then the GC should follow the steps that are outlined in the BrightBytes platform.

B. Explain Life Program

1. Manatee Technical College (MTC)

- Would do academics and work on vocation certification
- No major discipline or attendance issues

2. Horizons Academy

- Student would be dual enrolled
- Work on academics one day, On the Job Training (OJT) the next, student must be enrolled full time
- If student is making progress, a review may allow extended semester (up to two) to get diploma, if not, student can be counseled for GED program

C. Online Programs

1. E-Tech

2. FLVS

3. Smart Horizons or other programs that may exist * there may be a monetary commitment to these type of programs*

III. Attendance Responsibilities

The attendance clerk at each school will be responsible for monitoring attendance, sending letters for non-attendance and providing data for CST meetings according to the District guidelines.

IV. School Administrator Responsibilities

1. Counseling students/parents when needed
2. Conduct Exit Interviews (16 or older), when needed
3. Monitor W/D practices at the school to insure integrity

V. District Responsibilities

The District will assist schools by providing the following:

1. Social Workers to perform various aspects of the truancy.
2. Continue to update Student Information Systems (SIS) when students successfully pass the GED.
3. Provide data back to schools regarding Dropout W/D codes of students who should be researched and cleaned on a monthly basis.
4. Assist with training of all parties.
5. Home Ed will monitor W24 codes and insure that these students have registered by comparing SIS data to internal database. Home Ed will engage official's when needed.
6. SIS office will perform frequent queries of W/D codes to ensure proper protocols are being followed.

Home Education Enrollment Process

For students enrolling in Home Education from Manatee County Public Schools, the following processes must be followed:

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian goes to the student's current school or Office Student Assignment (OSA) office to notify the registrar/guidance representative they wish to withdraw their child to Home Education.

2. Base-School Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date, and return the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form.
- Confirm that all textbooks and library books have been returned, and that all debts have been paid.
- Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form with a school stamp.
- Return the completed original copy of the *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form to the parent/guardian, keeping a copy for your files. Send a copy to OSA so student is officially enrolled.

3. Home Education Paperwork:

- Once the original completed *Notice of Intent to Establish a Florida Home Education Program* form is turned into the Home Education Office, confirm the form has been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the base-school representative.
- The parent/guardian and student can meet with Home Education personnel to receive resource information/options and discuss requirements or receive documents in the mail.

The student is now officially enrolled in Home Education.

Home Education Termination Process

For students terminating Home Education and returning to Manatee County Public Schools, the following processes must be followed:

1. Initial Notification:

- The parent/guardian contacts the Home Education office to notify that they wish to withdraw their child from Home Education.

2. Home Education Paperwork:

- Provide and have the parent/guardian complete, sign, date and return the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form.
- The Virtual School counselor reviews academic records from virtual schools and/or the student's portfolio to determine grades/units/credits earned.
 - i. Record this information on the Manatee District's Home Education Grade Report for *Incoming Students* form and attach documentation.
 - ii. Have the parent/guardian sign and date completed Grade Report form.
 - iii. Sign, date, and stamp the completed *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and *Grade Report* forms with the school stamp.
 - iv. If there are significant gaps in the academic records, or if the student failed to complete course work, notify the APC at the student's base-school via email.
 - v. Return the completed original copies of the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and *Grade Report* forms to the parent/guardian, keeping a copy for your files pending notification from the student's base-school that the student has indeed enrolled. (At this time, no data entry has been done and the student is not officially terminated from Home Education.)
- Instruct the parent/guardian to report to the student's base-school within five (5) days to turn in the completed original *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and *Grade Report* forms. Social Work Services must be notified if this does not occur.

3. Base-School Paperwork:

- Once the parent/guardian turns in the original completed *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* forms have been appropriately signed, dated, and school stamped by the Home Education office.
- Academically place the student based on information provided on the MCPS Home Education Grade Report form and any other information relayed by the Home Education/Virtual School counselor.
- Sign, date, and school stamp the *Notice of Termination of Home Education Program* form and *Grade Report* forms, keeping the originals, and providing one copy to the parent/guardian.
- Via email, notify the Home Education office to officially withdraw the student to their base-school and perform required data entry.

**Manatee County
Exit Interview Student Survey**

School Name _____ School District _____

Student Name _____ Student DOB _____

Grade Level _____ Date _____

Directions: Please circle the response that best describes your experience or provide a description of your experience in the space provided.

1. Which of the following best describes your **primary** reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

2. Which of the following best describes your **secondary** reason for terminating school enrollment?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| A. Classes were not interesting/bored | K. Student-teacher conflict |
| B. Missed too many days and could not catch up | L. Employment/have to work full-time |
| C. Did not like school | M. Friends dropped out |
| D. Failing classes/couldn't keep up with school work | N. Failed to pass FCAT |
| E. Illness | O. Intimidated/Threatened/Bullied |
| F. Became a parent | P. Migrant |
| G. Getting married | Q. Homeless |
| H. Felt like I did not belong | R. Family Problems |
| I. Suspended from school often | S. Other |
| J. Expelled from school | |

3. What would have improved your chances of staying in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning)
- B. Better teachers
- C. Smaller classes
- D. More individualized instruction
- E. Better communication with your teachers
- F. Better communication with your parents
- G. Increased parental involvement
- H. Less freedom and more supervision from parents
- I. Less freedom and more supervision from school officials
- J. Other

4. What actions did your school personnel take to keep you enrolled in school? (Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Provided student counseling | I. Discussed and offered participation in a credit recovery course/program |
| B. Scheduled a conference with parent(s), guardian(s), student, and school staff | J. Discussed and offered access to Dropout Prevention Program(s) (e.g., alternative education, disciplinary, teenage parent) |
| C. Discussed and offered options for tutoring | K. Tracked student progress (by teacher, counselor, social worker, graduation coach, etc.) |
| D. Discussed the consequences of dropping out | L. Changed or revised course schedule |
| E. Discussed and offered options for continuing education in a different environment (e.g., Adult Education, home school, virtual school, hospital homebound) | M. Implemented intervention contracts (e.g. attendance or behavior) |
| F. Discussed and offered alternative options for graduation (e.g., diploma options, GED Exit Option or GED Testing) | N. Student reported that school staff took no action |
| G. Conducted home visits | O. Other |
| H. Referred student to agencies/programs to address problems interfering with school success (e.g., substance abuse counseling, psychological counseling, family counselor) | |

Please check and sign below to certify that each of the following statements was addressed by school personnel.

I am at least 16 years of age and it is my intent to terminate my school enrollment. I received counseling from a guidance counselor or other school personnel which addressed the following:

- ☐ Terminating school enrollment prior to graduation will likely reduce my potential earnings and negatively affect my career options.
- ☐ Termination of school enrollment will result in the revocation/denial of my driving privileges until age 18.
- ☐ My reasons for leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Possible actions that could keep me from leaving school prior to graduation.
- ☐ Options for continuing my education in a different environment, e.g., Adult Education or GED testing.
- ☐ For Bright Futures eligibility, GED students must complete credit requirements before taking GED exam.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
(if student is under 18 years of age)

School Personnel Signature: _____ Date: _____

Optional:

1. What is the highest level of education completed by your maternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown

2. What is the highest level of education completed by your paternal parent/guardian? (circle one)

Elementary Middle School High School College Graduate School Unknown